PORTRAITS OF THE NINETIES

E. T. RAYMOND

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PORTRAITS OF THE NINETIES

PORTRAITS OF THE SIXTIES

By Justin McCarthy.
With portrait Illustrations.

PORTRAITS OF THE SEVENTIES

By the Rt. Hon. G. W. E. Russell.
With portrait Illustrations.

PORTRAITS OF THE EIGHTIES

By Horace G. Hutchinson.
With portrait Illustrations.

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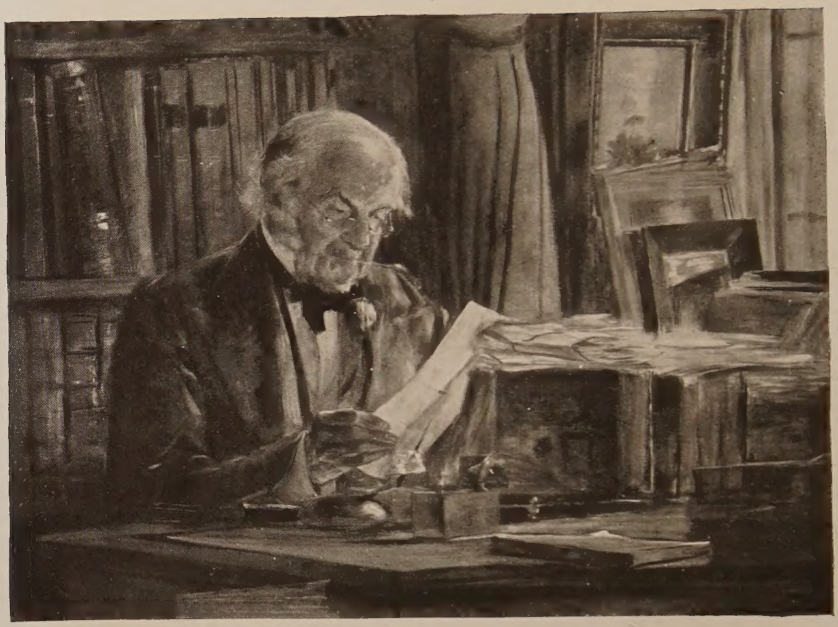

(*From a portrait by J. McLure Hamilton.*)

W. E. GLADSTONE.

[*Frontispiece*

Thompson, Edward Raymond

PORTRAITS OF THE NINETIES

By

E. T. RAYMOND

WITH 20 ILLUSTRATIONS

T. FISHER UNWIN, LTD.
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PORTRAITS OF THE NINETIES

CHAPTER I

THE NINETIES

THE late Mr. Justin McCarthy's vivid *Portraits of the Sixties*, the late Mr. George Russell's admirable volume dealing with the men and women of the Seventies, and Mr. Horace Hutchinson's more recent *Portraits of the Eighties* form together an invaluable biographical guide to a period second in interest to none in modern history. It is the business of a less distinguished pen to attempt to give some account of leading figures during the last years of the century and of the reign of Queen Victoria.

The task is one to be approached with equal interest and trepidation. With interest, because what men thought and did in the Nineties—still more what they neglected to do and forgot to think—is still powerful to-day; what we are and suffer was in the main decided for us a quarter of a century ago. With trepidation, because the time is distant enough for the reader to demand something more than a mere essay in instantaneous photography, with its mad foreshortenings and irrelevant emphasis; while it is also near enough for errors to be exposed by competent witnesses—people who were behind the scenes at the performance, while the writer was only one of the gallery.

It requires no great courage to attempt an " appreciation " of anybody, from Homer to Addison, who has long been dead. For if one knows very little about such people, there is really very little to be known—little, that is, to tell us the very men they were. The great figures of the past are either phantoms or statues, things of mist or things of stone, without form or with nothing but form. Of a phantom there can be any view ; of a statue there can be essentially but one ; the only possible diversity is attained by throwing coloured lights on it, as they do on stage groups. Thus, when literary men say that the time has not yet arrived for a " final estimate " of this person or that, they do not mean that a true estimate may be formed hereafter. All they mean is that any present estimate is liable to effective contradiction. When effective contradiction becomes by the nature of things impossible, we have not necessarily attained truth, but we have achieved what is called " historical perspective."

" Drastic measures," said the schoolboy in *Vice Versa*, " is Latin for a whopping." " Historical perspective " means immunity from being " whopped" for an unlucky guess. The learned professor to whom the mind of his own butler is probably a dark mystery discourses confidently about the secret motives of Tiglath Pilezer or Oliver Cromwell, not because he knows, but because he knows nobody else knows. An anti-authoritarian like Mr. Wells will traverse the said professor's view (if he happens not to like it) with equal decision and for the same reason. Everybody may declare that the professor is right and Mr. Wells wrong. Nobody can prove it.

The case is different when a letter to *The Times*, stating an indisputable but hitherto unpublished fact, may make nonsense of the most ingenious deductions, or when (as in the case of Lord Beaconsfield) light is suddenly thrown on a quite unsuspected corner of

some great man's character. The writer is not foolish enough to pretend to "finality," and will not be greatly perturbed if he is accused of doing less or more than justice to individuals. In some sense the ancients were right in holding that the real purpose of biography was less truth than edification. For the "verdict of history" is a futility when considered in relation to the individual arraigned before its bar; when we can be sure of doing perfect justice in the simplest police case we may begin to talk about the infallibility of a tribunal of pedants. The chief usefulness of such a verdict is that of a sign-post to the living; and for such purpose the rough method of the ancients, who put a halo round one man's head and hung another in chains by the roadside, was perhaps more effective than the modern way of submitting all to the same sort of post-mortem examination. Carry analysis to the length of an autopsy, and hero and scoundrel look very much alike.

The writer's view, it may be repeated, is rather that of the gallery than the green-room. It is least of all that of any individual player's tea-party. The gallery has its defects. Attention is diverted by the crackers of nuts and suckers of oranges. The actors appear quaintly foreshortened, and throw puzzling shadows. The finer by-play sometimes passes unnoticed, or its meaning is not rightly apprehended. There is a tendency, perhaps, to think the man who mouths his part the best actor. But on the whole the gallery knows a good play when it sees it, and is more than any other part of the house free from the more cranky prepossessions of the moment. It has no pose. It has little faddism. It has neither the servility nor the malice of the deadhead. It has paid honest money, and wants honest money's worth, is unaffectedly pleased when it gets it, and frankly angry if it doesn't. It may be too generous when it claps, and a trifle unjust when it hisses. But it is honest in both moods.

If the writer may sometimes avail himself of the privileges of the gallery to deal frankly with the eminent, he has certainly no bias against the Nineties. He recalls them as, on the whole, a golden age. The sun shone brighter in those days. The east wind was less bitter. The women were certainly prettier and (perhaps) more modest ; the steaks were juicier ; the landladies were a kindlier race. There was a zest and flavour in life lacking to-day. Youth was emancipated from the harsher kind of parental control, and had not yet found a stern step-father in the State. The world was all before it where to choose, and the future was veiled in a rose-coloured mist. If some well-meaning elder suggested that one might (by working really hard) end by being Attorney-General, or even editor of *The Times*, one said the right thing aloud, but inwardly murmured, " Ambition should be made of jollier stuff." Those were, in short, the days when for men now middle-aged everything was possible, except failure and death : unthinkable things notoriously invented by old fogies to depress the spirits of immortal youth.

One other thing was " unthinkable," and that was war. A " sort of war " was, of course, familiar to the early Nineties ; the public then rather enjoyed seeing the bombardment of Alexandria on the diorama (perhaps it is necessary to explain that the diorama was " the pictures " of that less advanced epoch). It relished small frontier campaigns. It was overjoyed with things like the smashing of Lobengula and the Jameson Raid. The Liberal *Speaker*—the *Nation* of those days—even thought it necessary to reprove the taste which delighted in pictures and descriptions of savage warfare ; it talked about a " recrudescence of barbarism." But of war in the real sense nobody dreamed.

Why should there be war ? We had enough, and to spare, of the earth's surface : some even rather

objected to the addition of the small black baby of Uganda to our enormous family. We were willing to help Germany, as one of the Teutonic family, to help herself to other people's belongings ; as for France, the appetite of that " dying nation," its petulance over various more or less important matters —Egypt, Siam, Newfoundland, and the like—was certainly annoying, but war with France, as with anybody else, was—well, " unthinkable." The sound of great guns in the Eastern seas, proclaiming the advent of a Pagan Great Power, broke faintly on English ears, but few heeded the portent. One rather wooden and rigid race had smashed another race even more rigid and wooden, and had done it in a style suggestive of Western efficiency. But that was all. There might be some little stir in the Chancelleries. But no unofficial English head worried itself about a " Far Eastern question," even after Japan had been bundled out of Port Arthur by a combination of European Powers, until towards the very end of the century.

Then, indeed, the clash of war, East, West, and South—in China, in the Philippines, in the Gulf of Mexico, in the Sudan, and in South Africa—might well have suggested some fear of the general toppling over which was to come. But each incident was treated as a thing by itself ; of the way the world was going, of the real forces at work, the Nineties had little conception. Rome under the Antonines was not more sure of the impossibility of any fundamental change.

It is not altogether fanciful to connect this insensibility, this half-pathetic faith that whatever was very dull must necessarily be very solid and permanent, with the long reigns of certain European monarchs and the extended lives of many public men. Few remembered any head of the English State but Queen Victoria, or any Austrian Kaiser but Francis Joseph.

William I was only lately dead ; it was but yesterday that the word of Bismarck stood against the world, as it had done for a generation. Mr. Gladstone was still the first figure in British politics till nearly the middle of the Nineties : Lord Salisbury's record extended back to the dim days of Palmerston ; even the Pope seemed immortal. Huxley and Tyndal were survivals of an earlier age ; the old fairy tales of science had grown commonplace, and the newer wonders were still to come ; though there were stirrings in letters and art, on the whole it was still the reign of the old men.

Yet this appearance of changelessness was largely deceptive. The Nineties were essentially a time of transition. They resembled that point in the life of a caterpillar when a change of skin is almost due. The thing is at once lethargic and uneasy ; its qualms and its inertia alike suggest coming dissolution. But beneath its rusty coat the essential activities are going on, and presently the old constrictive covering will split, and a quite new-looking creature emerge. What may be called a sort of fatigued shabbiness was observable in the upper strata of society during the Nineties. The split in the caterpillar's coat had begun, but had not proceeded far ; patches of dead skin, of skin not quite dead, and of new skin thrusting its way through the ancient envelope gave a mottled and unsatisfactory appearance. The old society was visibly finishing ; the new society had only arrived in spots ; and each was not quite sure of itself. The fount of honour, which now plays steadily on new wealth, spirted fitfully after the manner of a " lady-teaser " at a fair. Sometimes the stream hit a Cunliffe-Lister, sometimes a Thomas Lipton. The ancient gentility of the squires still stuck stolidly to the land, but there was a certain restlessness in the younger generation, and when an old man died an old house often changed hands, and a mysterious

somebody from the city arrived who filled the place with troops of week-end friends and gave the impression that he did not much care whether " the county " called or not.

In politics landed Toryism was already giving way to the vigorous urban and suburban varieties ; its leaders were mostly stricken in years, and its cadets seemed to lack either ability or ambition. The great entertainers of the old type carried on the tradition with a massive resolution, but, as it seemed, with little conviction ; it was the atmosphere of the epilogue, not even of the last act. For over all the older magnificence hung the challenge of the new millionaires who had captured Park Lane. The Embankment was beginning to be what it is now—a *via dollarosa*, sacred to the splendid equipages of men equally great in the City and the West. The old aristocracy seemed conscious that the new pace would kill—the pace of the petrol age just then opening up. They were right. The twentieth century had not much more than dawned before the old caterpillar skin definitely gave way, and something quite new appeared, vigorous and symmetrical, with a keen appetite and a sure objective : the aristocracy of what may be called dynamic wealth, the wealth that reproduces itself by a sort of geometrical progression.

Of this conquest of the old by the new which was proceeding in the Nineties, the closest observer was the working-class politician. While the rest were assuming the permanence of the old conditions, while Liberalism boasted itself Gladstonian, and Conservatism was still Disraelian, Labour sent Mr. Keir Hardie to the House of Commons. It had guessed rightly the main thing that had happened, however mistaken it might be on details. Up to the Nineties Labour was sicklied o'er with the pale cast of the thought of John Stuart Mill. In the Nineties it turned contemptuously away from every " 'ism " that

lay between Mr. Gladstone's position and Mr. Bradlaugh's. It was now ready to use Liberalism, but for Liberalism, in another sense, it had no use; it was, if such a word can be used where there was no sort of regard, more friendly to the squire than to the rich Radical, but only because in its view the squire did not matter much, and the great Radical did. Since the Nineties Labour has changed less than any party. Its older leaders can—and very often do—make, with applause, the same speeches to-day that struck audiences with a sense of novelty just after the setting up of that great landmark in industrial history—the London dockers' strike.

The middle classes went on as in the days of Noë. They ate, drank, and sang "Ta-ra-ra-boom-deay." For them there never was, and there probably never will be, a period like the Nineties. It was in many ways not a healthy period economically; the school of economic thought which was even then in the making deplored its "deleterious cheapness." Certainly everything was cheap except Consols and Home rails, and human flesh and blood were as cheap as anything. It was a dismal equation the hopelessly (or even hopefully) poor had to work out in terms of pieces of silver and hours of labour. And the hopeful were few; the poor man could, as a rule, see nothing before him but bare subsistence. But those who had money, even a very little, could buy much with it; and it was possible to live a quite liberal life on less than the wages of a dustman of to-day.

For the Londoner especially life went very well then. He suffered from the still undiminished reign of fog and the tall hat. But otherwise his lot was happy. Town was quieter, but just as amusing as it is now, less pretentious, and far less wearing; it had lost both the dismalness and the crude rowdiness of an earlier period, and had not yet developed the raucous note of the modern city. One rumbled

along comfortably on a horse-omnibus, or jingled merrily in a hansom, and was moderately sure of getting somewhere. Superficially everything was slower than now ; practically it was much the same. For if the Underground steam train was a trifle more leisurely, there was never a breakdown ; and if the horse-omnibus was supposed to take ten minutes to Liverpool Street, it got to Liverpool Street in ten minutes. " An hour from the city " meant an hour ; to-day it may mean anything from twenty minutes to a hundred and fifty, according to what the directors think of a Labour leader's economics or the railway and omnibus men of a Minister's policy.

Well-fed, addicted to rather more healthy ideas of recreation than his predecessors, amazingly ignorant of the outside world, deplorably educated, but not unintelligent, the average young man of the Nineties was decidedly self-satisfied. He thought himself a credit to his country, and thought his country the only country worth mentioning. Continentals were people who provided us with music-hall entertainers, barbers, bakers, cheap clerks, and picturesque guests to see the recurrent Jubilee, when John Bull, like a hospitable host, bared his big right arm and showed his muscle to the visitors—in the form of a naval display at Spithead and a procession of white, black, and yellow troops through the streets of London. The American hardly counted.

" Ta-ra-ra-boom-deay " was the personal note of the period. " Soldiers of the Queen "—

> " When we say that England's *master*,
> Remember who have made *her* so "—

represented the national gesture of the time : a time of boundless confidence sustained on a basis in one sense horribly insecure and in another firm as adamant. For, while the shakiness of the material foundation of England's " mastery " was soon to be

exposed, the man of the Nineties was to be otherwise justified in his careless faith. In " reeking tube and iron shard " we were found but second-rate ; it was the qualities the Nineties rather went out of their way to deride that pulled us through the evil days that followed that singular time. The English character might seem a little vulgarised just then, a little disfigured by superficial cynicism, but it still had its fellow to seek. And it was just the young rowdy of that day, and not the elder who rebuked him, who saved the period in the good opinion of its successors. The older men of the Nineties had more than a touch of Polonius ; they were excellent in counsel, but of " most weak hams." But if it was the autumn of the old excellences, it was the springtide of other things, and the Nineties will always have a claim on the reverence of Englishmen as the breeding and growing time of men as brave as any of our blood.

CHAPTER II

THE EARL OF ROSEBERY

"I WOULD give you a piece of plate if you could get that lad to work; he is one of those who like the palm without the dust."

So wrote Mr. William Cory, one of the masters at Eton in the Sixties, concerning a favourite pupil, Lord Dalmeny, later to be widely famed as Earl of Rosebery and Prime Minister of England. Mr. Cory seems to have belonged to a rather rare class of men, and a perhaps still rarer class of schoolmasters: those who really like boys and enjoy themselves in very young society. Others besides Bacon have deemed it a not quite wholesome taste; at any rate there is always a danger attaching to it—one may develop into a hero-worshipper of a rather pitiable kind. Worse still, one may get accustomed to the most sickly kind of incense. When Paul is in his proper position at the feet of Gamaliel it is good for Paul, but less certainly good for Gamaliel. When Gamaliel sits at the feet of Paul it is good for neither. So when the excellent Cory talks with reverent enthusiasm about the talented youth of the upper classes a normal man is conscious of a certain impatience. Young Dalmeny seems to have overpowered him. He is "surely the wisest boy that ever lived." His Latin verses are not as other boys'. He writes "flowing, simple, dignified Latin," "enjoys the old poetry as much as the modern," and is (at fifteen or a little more) "a strong but wise admirer of both Napoleons." "I am doing all I can," says Mr.

Cory, " to make him a scholar; anyhow, he will be an orator, and, if not a poet, such a man as poets delight in."

All this is most reminiscent of the schoolboys of Thackeray, with their prize-poem inspirations, their Jacobite or Jacobin enthusiasms, and their quaint affectations of profundity. But Mr. Cory, with all his affectionate partiality for the young Scottish aristocrat, is still sagacious. He puts his finger unerringly on the weak spot. The mature Lord Rosebery, of course, did not get what the young Lord Dalmeny wanted. He just missed the palm, and he got a great deal of the dust. But the desire to have the best of all worlds, the love of facile success, the resentment of pain, trouble, and ingratitude, no doubt explain his strange and splendid but rather maimed career. Mr. Gladstone described him, while he was still young, as " the man of the future." Judges scarcely less competent than Mr. Gladstone used Mr. Gladstone's words when he had advanced well into later middle life.

The mistake was natural enough ; there is hardly anything that Lord Rosebery might not have been, with good luck. But bad luck was his almost from the cradle. He had scarcely known his father when death left only a very old man's life between him and a Scottish Earldom, an English Barony, half a dozen minor hereditary distinctions, a large rent-roll, and a goodly amount of cash. A few years later his mother married again ; she was a daughter of the house of Stanhope, a Court beauty, and a woman of some intellectual distinction, to whom the young Dalmeny no doubt owed much of his wit, as well as the almost girlish good looks which were his in early life. There were literary elements on both sides of his ancestry. The Primroses of Jacobean days had produced preachers and writers of some eminence, and a didactic turn was natural in the family. Lord Rose-

bery's father, for example, was author of a dissertation on the excellence of physical exercise and its neglect by the middle classes of these islands; he acutely pointed out that the poor cultivated their muscles at work, and the rich in sport, but the intervening order simply neglected its physique, being engaged from morning till night in making a living—all of which was clearly most unintelligent on the part of the intervening order. The son was destined to come closely enough in touch with actuality to avoid such artlessness. Nevertheless some trace of the parental self-satisfaction was a constant in Lord Rosebery's character. He could never get out of his head the notion of his superiority to all common men in his capacity of aristocrat, and his superiority to nearly all aristocrats in his capacity of a man of intellect.

A favourite with his grandfather, but deprived of the discipline that only a closer relationship can supply, the boy followed much his own bent. He was admired at the preparatory school; he was admired at Eton. We have seen what one of the masters thought of him. With the boys he was not less a hero. For, as the worshipper already quoted remarks, he was "full of fun," carelessly good at games, carelessly good at lessons, the very type of easy and good-natured mastery that the young aristocrat, with his liking for talent and his contempt for the "swot," most admires. At Christchurch the same sort of thing began over again. Lord Dalmeny was a more important Arthur Pendennis, with tastes as catholic and far ampler means of indulging them. He liked horseflesh, he liked fine cookery and noble vintages, he liked old editions, he liked being heir to an Earldom, he liked equally the reputation of being superior to all that. One of the last lordly undergraduates to wear a "tuft," he probably wore it with outward disrespect and secret conviction; it is at least

recorded that he wore it once when it was not actually needed or permissible. But, though the discipline of Christchurch was mild and partial, it was still discipline. Lord Dalmeny entertained decided views as to the propriety of an undergraduate riding steeplechasers. The Authorities took up a peremptorily adverse attitude ; it was not a case for compromise, and Lord Dalmeny left without taking his degree. Of such honours, indeed, he had small need. He had hardly attained his majority when his grandfather's death made him a Peer and one of the most eligible bachelors of the moment. All the worlds, political, social, and literary, were before him where to choose.

At Eton he is said to have declared to a chum his three great ambitions—to marry a great heiress, to win the Derby, and to become Prime Minister. The first aim was accomplished early and happily by his Rothschild marriage. The fulfilment of the second arrived to him, a joy but perhaps not a blessing, when the third prize had at last come within his grasp. The story may not be true. But one feels it should be true, since it so well illustrates the fatal weakness of a very considerable man. " You fight too scattering," said Mark Twain, in criticism of the conduct of an American general's Indian campaign. Lord Rosebery's defect was that he always " fought too scattering." In natural abilities he was certainly behind no man of his time. In many ways he had a quite un-English logicality and clearness of perception. Time and time again, throughout his long career, he has (when not affected by personal or class interest) put his finger on the spot when others were fumbling about it. But he has always been very English indeed in carrying to extreme that national weakness for wanting to have one's cake and eat it. His non-political speeches teem with enthusiasms for incompatible things ; he really seems to have per-

suaded himself that Cromwell, Burke, and himself were all democrats. It is in his own plan of life, however, that the principle remains most obvious. Lord Rosebery, with half his talent for politics, could have surpassed the record of many men who actually went much further. With his imaginative insight and his noble sense of language he could have reached almost the highest in certain important departments of literature. With a little industry and tenacity he could have been Prime Minister for twenty splendid years instead of for twenty embarrassed months. He could, if he had wished, have wielded a power with his pen superior to that of any ordinary Prime Minister. But he wanted all sorts of things, and in all things he tended to covet the easily gained palm. Capable of great energy on occasion, he never achieved that habit of unresting, unintermitting exertion, of complete devotion to the thing in hand, which is the making of everything really first rate. Everything came easily to him—honours, money, phrases, opinions, positions ; the necessity of hard work was never his, the habit of hard work he never quite formed, and there was nobody to form it for him. " Easy come, easy go," does not apply to material possessions alone, and the testing-time proved how different in quality are the views adopted because one rather likes them from the convictions formed in sore travail of mind and spirit.

In one sense Lord Rosebery was especially a man of the Nineties. His first appearance in politics was a full twenty years before ; his return to politics seemed always imminent for twenty years afterwards. But it was in the Nineties that he climbed—or was hoisted—into the highest place, and it was in the Nineties that he fell, with a great and (as was afterwards seen) final ruin. One considerable act had already been played when the decade opened—the act of " Citizen Rosebery," the first Chairman of the

London County Council. For a year or two it seemed that the man of the future had become in very fact the man of the present. With a very splendid enthusiasm Lord Rosebery threw himself into a work which, after all, could not have been highly attractive to a man of his nature—a work involving an immensity of small detail and bringing him into contact with a rather repulsive mass of petty motive and ambition. But to make London, in his own phrase, "not a unit, but a unity," to place the great amorphous, disconnected capital, with its poverty of public spirit, on something like a level with the great provincial towns, was no mean object, and there was something heroic in the self-denial with which the clever Peer entered on his task of Lord Mayor of Greater London. Here at least the dust was cheerfully borne without thought of the palm. It might be an advantage that the palm was lacking, that civic trouble was not complicated by civic turtle, and that the Earl was not expected to consider his battalions of Moderates and Progressives in terms of prandial amenity and social precedence. But there were other hard things; thus he had to go in person round the music-halls to judge whether Mrs. Ormiston Chant was justified in her extreme view of the demoralising effect of "Zæo's back" ("Zæo," be it explained, was a music-hall artist—I think performing at the old Westminster Aquarium—whose scantiness of clothing offended the still vigorous Puritanism of the day). Lord Rosebery was an amateur of the legitimate stage; he has confessed his early extravagance in the matter of theatre stalls. But it is credibly reported by the chroniclers of the time that he appeared "supremely bored" by the indicted performances, and somebody remarked, parodying the old boast of the Aquarium, that at no other place in London could so many sighs be heard.

In a word, Lord Rosebery's London County Council

period was one of really hard work and much self-sacrifice. " But long it could not be." Apart from the desolating bereavement which Lord Rosebery had suffered, it was not in his nature to be long contented with routine, and especially with routine of this kind. The inadequately " flowing tide " of 1892, indeed, found him far from desirous of any kind of activity. He was shrewd enough to see the full hopelessness of the task before Mr. Gladstone, and only his affection for that statesman—an affection almost filial in its sincerity—impelled him to take control of Foreign Affairs. We know now what could always be inferred—the strong distaste of the Liberal chiefs for attempting, with the feeble instrument the election had given them, a legislative programme which would have taxed the strength of a Cabinet supported by the largest and most homogeneous majority. Lord Rosebery was for declining the responsibility, or at best for only carrying on with routine administration. But when Mr. Gladstone asked, he could not refuse ; the bond between the aged leader and the political youth was too strong to be lightly severed. One of Mr. Gladstone's most amiable characteristics was his sympathy with youthful promise, particularly if allied with patrician blood ; he had early marked Lord Rosebery as his ultimate successor ; he had lost no opportunity of recommending him to the party ; and gratitude, as well as fervent admiration, made the Peer, not generally an easy man to get on with, amenable to the lightest wishes of the great Commoner.

But naturally the sense of personal obligation did not fully supply the want of earnest conviction. It would probably have been better for all parties and interests if Lord Rosebery had adhered to his original desire to stand aside. During the dismal business of " ploughing the sands," he immersed himself as far as possible in the work of the Foreign Office. He did his duty, of course. He made a great speech in

defence of the Home Rule Bill when, having passed the House of Commons, it shivered friendless and naked, like a stranger bird in a coop of vicious young cockerels, in the baleful presence of the Peers. He satirised the ceremoniousness of the killing—all the preliminaries of the bull-fight, the skirmishings and the prickings and the wavings of scarlet cloth, leading up to the moment when the matador, in the person of Lord Salisbury, should deal the fatal thrust. These things, as always, he did amazingly well. But it was evident enough that his heart was little in the farce-tragedy of the Second Home Rule Bill.

When at last Mr. Gladstone took leave of his last Cabinet, and the question of a successor arose, Lord Rosebery's mind was divided. His ambition bade him grasp the prize now it was within reach, though none was more aware of the tenuity of the gilt film and the indigestibility of the gingerbread. His clear-headed sense told him all the difficulties he would have to encounter—and those not merely matters of personal hostility, of a sneering Labouchere and a disappointed Harcourt, but questions of foreign policy on which it would be difficult to secure an adjustment between the national necessities and the traditions and temper of the Liberal Party. He decided, and there was an immediate revolt against a Peer-Premier, intensified by Lord Rosebery's declaration in the House of Lords that the assent of England, as the " predominant partner," was an essential preliminary to Home Rule. Lord Rosebery had some time before confessed to no very definite convictions on the subject of Ireland ; he was now savagely assailed as a traitor to the cause of Home Rule. " R. not particularly agitated," Lord Morley notes in his diary of the time, " though he knew pretty well that he had been indiscreet. ' I blurted it out,' he said. ' For heaven's sake,' said I, ' blurt out what you please about any country in the whole world, civilised

or barbarous, except Ireland. Irish affairs are the very last field for that practice.' R.: 'You know that you and I have agreed a hundred times that until England agrees H. R. will never pass.' J. M.: 'That may be true. The substance of your declaration may be as sound as you please, but not to be said at this delicate moment.'" Morley had to clear up the mess. "It is much easier," he comments, "to get yourself out of a scrape of this kind than to explain away another man."

Lord Rosebery has left on record an impressive summary of the miseries of a Liberal Peer-Premier. They are miseries, no doubt, to some extent inherent to the case—at the best his own image of "riding a horse without reins" probably does not overstate them. In his own peculiar circumstances, being hardly on speaking terms with the leader of the House of Commons, they were in every way fatal. Far more than the protests of the Nonconformists, they poisoned Lord Rosebery's Derby success with Ladas; they endowed him with the tortures of perpetual insomnia; they silvered his hair; lined his full face with wrinkles; and embittered a temper naturally genial, if hasty and imperious. "There are," he said, in referring to his term of office, "two supreme pleasures in life, the one ideal, the other real. The ideal is when a man receives the seals of office from his Sovereign. The real pleasure comes when he hands them back."

An experience from which probably no man could have emerged triumphant seems to have destroyed for ever what chance Lord Rosebery might have had of evading the handicap of his temperament. Pessimism now descended on him, and pessimism is always sterile. Henceforward he was the "retired raven croaking on the withered branch"; his merit was that the croak was often excellent sense and music, and always excellent English. In one of Mr. Gals-

worthy's plays there is a woman who laments that she is " too fine and not fine enough." The description seems to fit Lord Rosebery. He talks with a certain disdain of his own business. " Office," he once said, " is indeed an acquired taste, though by habit persons may learn to relish it, just as men learn to love absinthe, or opium, or cod-liver oil." He could nourish a fine intellectual contempt for the gawds and toys of politics and society. But beneath this philosophy was a quite keen appetite for worship of any kind. The reverence of the excellent Cory was a luxury to the youth ; the man had grown to crave as a necessity a larger applause ; and it was the tragedy of his life that, after many years of rather uncritical admiration, there came abruptly a time of harsh appraisement, followed by still worse things —admiration without confidence, regard without loyalty, and finally neglect without oblivion. It was no doubt balm to Lord Rosebery, the self-made outcast from the Liberal fold, to have all eyes on him when he went to Chesterfield to proclaim—what ? That efficiency was an excellent thing, and that it would be an excellent thing if England were efficient. It was pleasant, no doubt, always to have the laugh of the stolid Campbell-Bannerman, to pierce him with fine points of wit, to deprive him of the best intellect of the party. But the last laugh was with " C.-B." When the time came, the man was not Lord Rosebery. " C.-B." needed not even to use his plain claymore against the dainty rapier of the brilliant lord ; trusting, like a rhinoceros, to the natural defence of pachydermity, he simply waddled over the argumentative entanglements prepared for him, and won without fighting.

The real drama of Lord Rosebery, it was then seen, had ended in the Nineties when he laid down the Liberal leadership at Edinburgh in a speech which remains as one of the most curious and mournful

monuments of political failure. The rest was merely en epilogue, full of brilliant lines and happy conceits, but adding nothing to the action. There was still to be a new reputation gained, or an old reputation extended—that of Imperial Orator in Chief. For, whatever Lord Rosebery's deficiencies might be, he united happily, as few men can, all the patriotisms. He loved Scotland, he loved Britain, he loved the Empire ; his imagination could concentrate on the homelands as well as expand to the " illimitable veldt." He did not make the mistake of some Imperialists of thinking merely in terms of mass. He was a Little Englander only in the sense of not conceiving of England—or Scotland—as little ; he was an Imperialist only in the sense of wishing to maintain and extend " the greatest secular agency for good known to mankind." Equidistant from opposite extravagances, there was in all his great Imperial speeches a width, a dignity, and a balance, as well as a fervour of conviction, hardly to be found elsewhere, and this solitary splendour sufficed to outweigh his occasional descent in other directions into what might seem mere whim and petulance. Finally, the noble stoicism, of a finer quality than the pagan variety that belongs to the average modern, with which, in the overcast winter of his life, he has supported public care and crushing private grief, gives a hint of what might have been had the fates been less cruelly kind in his formative years.

When the hardest is said of him, there remains so much to respect and like that he should be safe from those whom he has described as " the body-snatchers of history, who dig up dead reputations for malignant dissection."

CHAPTER III

CECIL RHODES

THE Nineties were the high and palmy days of the great Randlords and the "Kaffir Circus." The romance of the time was expressed, perhaps better than in the verse of Mr. Kipling, by a song then popular about "sailing away" and "coming back a millionaire." There was a certain virtue even in sailing away; it denoted contempt for the petty dullness of the British Isles, and to be contemptuous of the home of the race was then the mark of extreme patriotism. But most admirable of all was to come back a millionaire. The notion of snatching rich loot from remote places, and spending it in London, was intensely gratifying, even to people from whom one would naturally look for less simplicity. I remember hearing a certain great Peer of that day confess in public that he saw no future for England except as a sort of lounge and pleasure garden for those who had gathered immense wealth in the outer Empire. The more energetic sons of these islands, he argued, would always tend to sail away, and we might reasonably pray that a fair proportion would come back millionaires. The less enterprising, trained to minister to every want and whim of these conquerors, in the capacity of footmen, gardeners, gamekeepers, entertainers, and artificers in every kind, material and intellectual, would live in docile and contented servitude on wealth created overseas.

The curious malady of vision, of which this is an extreme example, had many victims in the latest

C. J. Rhodes

years of the nineteenth century. During the years between the two Jubilees of Queen Victoria the eyes of a great part of the nation were at the ends of the earth. Johannesburg seemed immensely nearer to London than any English town, and the Lancashire and Yorkshire Railway sounded more outlandish than the Canadian Pacific. It was the time of Consols at 114, and British pigs at what the dealer would give for them. There was an immense deal of money seeking investment, and unable, in the conditions then existing, to obtain profitable employment at home. So the millions which could not be found to cultivate the land of the Home Counties were poured out like water to finance any plausible African scheme ; and our public men seemed tc anticipate, not altogether without satisfaction, the time when Kent and Sussex would be to the millionaires of the Empire what Inverness and Sutherlandshire already were to the rich of Great Britain. The gold fever raged strongly. " Deeps " and " Fonteins " were the staple of conversation in all sorts of circles ; if one went to the theatre the chances were that the drop-scene would display in illuminated figures the closing prices of Rand securities ; and everybody who passed down Park Lane was reminded, by a certain house sprawling with naked nymphs and cupids, that the shortest way from Whitechapel to Mayfair crossed and recrossed the Equator.

It is necessary to recall this atmosphere, in which even the figure of Barney Barnato seemed invested with something of the glamour of Drake and Raleigh, to understand the place occupied by Cecil John Rhodes in the life of the Nineties. If mere swollen gamblers seemed, in the Gibbonian phrase, to " display the awful majesty of the hero," it was natural that a man very much more than a gambler, a man with a large share of the heroic, should fire the imagination of his contemporaries. Even to-day,

when we see Rhodes in a dry light, we are conscious of a quality which gives him admittance to that small and select brotherhood we agree to call great ; in the full blaze of his prestige it was indeed a steady eye which could avoid being dazzled by the splendour of him. To the ordinary non-critical man of that time, his very faults, as many now esteem them, contributed to the fascination he exercised. As a nation we may be somewhat prone—though it would seem more prudent to write in the past tense—to the " unctuous rectitude " with which Rhodes sneeringly credited us. But we have always a weakness for the strong man who shows his strength by smashing the Ten Commandments, so long as he satisfies us in his observances of all the taboos and ordinances contained in that greater table of the law which we call " cricket." Rhodes let it be known that he thought little of the Decalogue. But he succeeded in spreading the faith that he always played " cricket." Thus a legend arose concerning him which was not quite like the truth. He appeared to his contemporaries as a compound of the qualities we like to think specially English. He was admired for a recklessness which was certainly not part of his character, and for a frankness which did not always distinguish him. In any contest between Rhodes and statesmen at home the public was always ready to assume that the man who talked gallantly about " facing the music " was in some deep sense in the right, even if by technical standards he might be proved to be in the wrong. For this faith in his essential " whiteness " there was, indeed, some justification. He had certainly made his great fortune by much the same methods that other great African fortunes were made. He had had some very queer business and political associates. He had done many things that could be called strong, and perhaps some things that could be called wrong. That his most

fervent admirers were ready enough to admit. But they were not disposed to be censorious. Granted that Rhodes was a little cynical, and that in his earlier career there might be little to distinguish him (apart from manners and education) from the gamblers who " made good " in his company, it was still a fact that, arrived at great riches, he sought riches no more.

This combination of great wealth and disinterestedness appealed strongly to the British mind. We have little use for the poor idealist ; his ideals, we argue, cannot be very valuable, or how could he remain poor ? But we are seldom over-critical of the man who, with great wealth, subordinates money to an idea. " Big ideas," said Rhodes once to Gordon, " must have big cash behind them." Rhodes's countrymen were won by the fact that the big ideas supported by the big cash were not strictly commercial ideas. Had he been a mere company promoter, on however colossal a scale, he could not have won even a passing popularity. For he had no turn for sport or for society ; with something of the superstition of the Calvinist, he united the unsocial Calvinistic temper. He could be a good host at Groote Schuur, and a kindly master to his small knot of dependent intimates ; but he had no taste for the ordinary rich man's amusements. He could not have tickled the public fancy by running yachts or race-horses, or dazzled it by great display. But his " big ideas," it was soon recognised, were really big. They had, it is true, a touch of the vulgarity which so often attaches to very big things. Personally, Rhodes was not, indeed, without a vein of vulgarity. He was, it is true, by nature and education a gentleman, and he was, of course, very much more than a gentleman. But he had a passion for diamonds and a contempt for women ; he loved not merely appreciation but flattery of the grosser kind ; he was strangely content with the companionship of quite inferior men ; he

was not exempt from that very bad failing, a tendency to bully those who were in no position to retaliate. To gloss over these defects would be to give a wholly false view of a character which owes its distinction less to fine harmonies than to striking contrasts. Rhodes had his smallness. But there was another side of his character which gave him a singular dominion over minds which might be suspected of utter incapacity for hero-worship. His superiority was admitted by men far richer than himself, who seemed incapable of respecting anything but riches and the qualities that gain riches. Barney Barnato went ever in awe of him. Beit admitted his superiority. It was the magic of his name, long before he reached greatness, which permitted of the De Beers Consolidation, and made a commercial company for many years the virtual ruler of South Africa. It was the presence of something incalculable in his character which gave him his power over brother millionaires. They had one simple motive—to make money and enjoy it after their kind. Rhodes did not despise money, or luxury, or power. He had firm faith in the " big cash " ; though caring little for pleasure or society in the ordinary sense, he keenly relished magnificence of living ; his enjoyment of absolutism was Sultanic. But no Beit or Barnato could ever tell when his materialism or his mysticism would predominate, and they held him accordingly in the kind of perplexed respect with which madmen have been regarded in rude ages. More normal people, of course, were closer to a real understanding of this element in the man. The decent Dutchman knew that he had a genuine passion for South Africa. The decent Englishman knew that he had a genuine passion for England. Both knew that they could trust him in large things to prefer the South African and the British interest to that of the wealthy speculator. By that mysterious process which enables

whole masses of men without special information to do rough justice to the deeds and motives of the great, the impression spread to the mother country, and sufficed at the time of the Jameson raid to break the force of a fall which might otherwise have finally ruined him.

Any other man but Rhodes must have been ruined, and his true greatness, the greatness that was personal to him and had nothing to do with his wealth, was never better illustrated than in the sequel. Stripped of his offices, he still continued the greatest power in South Africa, and it was simply as Cecil Rhodes, and in no other capacity, that he made his famous peace with the Matabele, a peace which survived the shock of the Boer War. The story has often been told, how to win the confidence of the natives he left the expeditionary force, and lay in a tent, which could readily have been rushed, within easy reach of the enemy, without a single bayonet to protect him ; how, after a time, the natives, admiring his courage, agreed to a parley ; how Rhodes went unarmed to meet the chiefs in their full war kit ; how he calmly discussed with them all their grievances, and then, after three or four hours' talk, suddenly asked, " Is there to be peace or war ? " On which the chiefs threw down their spears at his feet, and the war was over. The incident well illustrates the kind of courage Rhodes possessed. No man could be further removed from the dare-devil. He was not even free from some suspicion of personal timidity. Some exceedingly brave deeds are credited to him, but it would seem that his courage was of that sort which is seen at its best when facing the ferocities of inanimate nature, the perils of fire and flood, of storm and earthquake. No unkindly critic has remarked on the fact that, when travelling with five or six other men through a lion-infested region, he habitually and instinctively took the position nearest

the tent-pole ; he coveted Ulysses' privilege of being eaten last. Under fire, though he never flinched, he was hardly comfortable ; he had little of the contempt of danger which distinguished his friend and follower, Dr. Jameson. Probably it is broadly true that he was at his best pitted against mere difficulties, and at his worst when he had to encounter an intelligent enemy. Even in the warfare of politics he preferred methods of suasion to those of force, and was always readier to compromise than to fight unless the nature of the issue forbade. But when his mind was set on anything his resolution could neither be bent nor broken, and he would face any incidental and unavoidable danger with the coolest stoicism. He no doubt exactly expressed the case when he said, describing his experiences in the second Matabele War, that he was in a funk all the time, but afraid to be thought afraid. His courage, in fact, though adequate to any ordinary military strain, was rather that of the statesman than of the soldier. In affairs he was singularly free from respect for persons or fear of responsibility ; he had made up his mind, from a very early stage, what he wanted to do, and difficulties, personal or material, existed only to be overcome. Ordinarily he was placable and plausible, concerned rather to smooth away opposition than to crush it ; but when seriously crossed he could be violent and even terrible in his rage. He demanded from most of his little court a subservience which was of small profit to him ; the meaner men came to know that it paid to flatter him and concur in all his views, and it thus happened that he was deprived of sound and disinterested advice when it would have been of the greatest service. Few men of his stature—for Rhodes was, with all deductions, a very great man—have been content with creatures so small ; Dr. Jameson was almost the only member of his immediate circle who

enjoyed his society on equal terms. Between these two men there was real affection. They had much in common—patriotism, a love of the wild, a sense of the romantic, a passion for action. But there seems also to have been a more obscure bond which secured the friendship against the risks involved in Jameson's frankness and Rhodes's intolerance to any form of contradiction. Rhodes's health was never good ; he was first driven from England at the age of seventeen by physical breakdown, and when he started for South Africa the second time he was given but six months to live. All through his life the fear of death weighed heavily on him, and, with the fatalistic superstition which modified his unbelief, he fancied that he was only safe when Jameson was within reach. Moreover, Jameson was a man of education, and Rhodes almost reached the ludicrous in his reverence for " a scholar and a gentleman." He had himself taken immense pains to get a degree. He was preparing for Oxford when forced to take his first trip abroad ; in 1872 he returned to matriculate at Oriel ; but it was not until 1881 that he was able to call himself a Master of Arts. There is something slightly humorous in the notion of this man, dealing with the largest practical affairs, flitting between Kimberley and Oxford in order to attain a distinction shared with many very dull and commonplace people. But Rhodes's faith in the English University system was an abiding characteristic. Sir Thomas Fuller relates that he pointed out that under the system at De Beers there was nothing but the honesty of one of the officials to prevent wholesale robbery of diamonds. " Oh," said Rhodes, " that's all right. Mr. —— takes charge of the diamonds. He is an Oxford man and an English gentleman. Perhaps if there were two at the job they might conspire." " One man," says the American philosopher, " learns the value of truth by going to

Sunday school, and another by doing business with liars." It would seem that the well-founded respect which Rhodes felt for the honesty of the English gentleman derived partly from his exhaustive experience of cosmopolitan adventurers.

Indeed, the arrogance which was one of the least pleasant characteristics of Rhodes—an arrogance which inflated his strong features and often gave a rather repellent aspect to an otherwise attractive face—was generally softened in the presence of men of science, letters, and humane learning. Rhodes might be stiff to a home politician, and overbearing to an African associate, but he was, both in London and at Groote Schuur, an easy and winning host to those whom he held in any kind of intellectual reverence, or whom he recognised as pursuing ideals he respected. The man who won the heart of Gordon must have been a remarkable man in more than his obvious aspects. There was, indeed, in Rhodes a kind of spiritual hunger contrasting almost pathetically with his superficial materialism and his blank unbelief. He had a temperament fitted for a great part in an age of faith, and it was his fate to be rather specially representative of an agnostic age. He had read in youth Winwood Reade's *Martyrdom of Man*, and had adopted its dogmatic atheism. Yet he wanted vehemently to believe in something; his strong interest in the supernatural eloquently testified to this hunger. A belief of some sort was, in fact, a necessity to a man such as he; and, if there was artlessness, there was full sincerity in his claim to be the instrument of the Providence whose existence he denied. God, he once said, was "obviously" trying to produce a predominant type most fitted to bring peace, liberty, and justice to the world; and only one race approached this "ideal type" of the Almighty. This was the race to which Rhodes himself belonged, the "Anglo-Saxon," and Rhodes

believed that the best way to help on God's work and fulfil His purpose in the world was to contribute to the predominance of the Anglo-Saxon race.

Such convictions may be philosophically absurd, but when they take possession of a mind richly endowed in practical qualities, and direct a will of altogether abnormal strength, they are bound to lead to great achievement. Rhodes belonged to that terrible order of men who conceive themselves, by virtue of the grandeur and purity of the visions that absorb and inspire them, released from the ordinary restraints appropriate to humbler people. "What have you been doing since I last saw you, Mr. Rhodes?" asked Queen Victoria once. "I have added," was the reply, "two provinces to Your Majesty's dominions." In the view of most people that sublimely sufficient answer would equally serve for the epitaph of the man who rendered it in haughty assurance that it justified his life. It is certainly an answer to be pleaded in any court of historical justice which returns a favourable verdict on other great empire-builders like Clive and Warren Hastings. Rhodes is to be judged as they are. As in their case, so in his, we have to set off great splendours and virtues against not inconsiderable blemishes. As in their case, so in his, we could wish that he had sometimes not neglected those maxims of morality which are also in the main the soundest maxims in policy; that he had never taken the crooked path; that he had always disdained the counsel of crooked people. But each nature has its own temptations, and the man of strong will who is passionately determined on a great object can seldom resist the temptations to break through fences barring what he thinks the shortest way to its attainment. Rhodes was thrown in very early life among men of a cynicism quite exceptional; and it is hardly wonderful that he became himself not a little cynical. But the real

greatness that underlay his character was shown by his cool estimate of wealth after he had made it. His head was no doubt a little affected by the intoxication of power. But mere money soon ceased to interest him. It is said that he would not trouble for months together to pay in dividend warrants amounting to hundreds of thousands of pounds, and, on hearing from the bank that his account was overdrawn, he would fumble in the pockets of some old dressing-gown or shooting-jacket for crumpled papers worth perhaps a million. Such a man may be at once acquitted of any ignoble worship of money. Yet much smaller men have proved capable of equal philosophy. The greatness of Rhodes lay in that very faith which, stated in words, provokes a smile, but, translated into deeds over half a lifetime and half a continent, compels a wondering respect. The racial arrogance with which the faith was expressed may sometimes offend. The acts which it prompted may sometimes appear questionable. Some of us may feel that the world is wide enough for all kinds of human talent and character, and that the burden of governing is too great for any one kind, however admirable. Others may feel strongly that the nation which most aspires to a moral domination must be more than ordinarily careful of its own morals. But when all is said the man who possessed such a faith and wrote it in characters of such sprawling bigness belongs to that small company of Englishmen who have really earned the often too lightly conceded adjective " great."

CHAPTER IV

MR. GLADSTONE

IT was in the nature of things that the majestic and challenging personality of Mr. Gladstone should evoke such variety of worship and censure that even to-day, after all has been written concerning him, the plain seeker after truth is not a little perplexed.

For he knows the man was great, and even very great, and that not merely in the sense of filling a great place over a great space of time; there was something above and beyond all that. Mr. Gladstone was more than the sum of all that Mr. Gladstone ever said or did; he had that rare quality, undefined because indefinable, which compels a homage of the spirit even when the intellect is in vehement opposition. Four only of Mr. Gladstone's greater contemporaries seem to have been wholly insensible to this influence. Whenever he was in question, Mr. Disraeli retained the fixed sneer of a Mephistopheles; Lord Salisbury gazed on him with as little emotion as a colossal Buddha or a landscape; Lord Randolph Churchill pursued him with the catcalls of a Gavroche; Mr. Parnell watched him with the cool and scientific detachment of an entomologist studying a beetle or some other creature with which he has nothing but life in common. But such complete freedom from the spell cast by the great Liberal statesman was rare. Others, though they said many bitter and many mocking things about him, never succeeded in hiding from the world, or

even from themselves, the extent to which he really impressed them. It was curious, and a little touching, to note how in the heat of the Irish debates Mr. Balfour would, on the smallest intimation that Mr. Gladstone's feelings had been seriously hurt by some shaft of ridicule, turn from irony to almost filial solicitude. Mr. Chamberlain, whose moral and intellectual colour scheme ran less to nuance and art tint, showed with a difference, but not the less sincerely, the extent to which his old chief still remained an element in his life. After 1886 he seldom spoke about Mr. Gladstone without a curious kind of anger ; the object was probably less Mr. Gladstone than himself, for being in this case unable completely to live up to his favourite philosophy of wasting no time in regretting " either mishaps or mistakes." As to others still in the train of Mr. Gladstone, his influence was extraordinary. It was assuredly no small man, or great man in the smaller way, who could inspire in Lord Rosebery, himself gifted with a manner that struck terror into those he wished to keep at a distance, the sort of reverence Tom Brown felt for Dr. Arnold. It was a very extraordinary man indeed who, himself of the strictest sect of the Pharisees, could bend the knees of so complacent a Sadducee and so lukewarm a hero-worshipper as John Morley. But perhaps the most remarkable case of all was that of Sir William Harcourt, who, never loved, and perhaps never really loving, was tamed into a submissive loyalty scarcely congruous with his proud and difficult temperament.

Of the human greatness of Mr. Gladstone, then, there can be no question. But when we come to deal with his statesmanship, the clouds of incense sent up by various groups of worshippers conceal more than is revealed by the light of their pious candles. The more simple school of devotees, who scouted the possibility that Mr. Gladstone could in any circumstances

be wrong, has naturally shrunk since his death ; but those who would discriminate are divided into many sects. There is one which admires him as an inspired financier, but censures his foreign policy ; there is another which venerates him mainly as the pacific idealist, the enemy of the Turkish and other tyrannies, and the friend of small peoples " struggling rightly to be free " ; some point approvingly to his essential conservatism ; others laud him, on the ground of his " trust in the people, tempered by prudence," as a great democrat ; still others admire chiefly his marvellous command of the technique of Parliamentary Government. In short, Mr. Gladstone is revered by all kinds of incompatible people on all kinds of incompatible grounds. But, of all tributes paid to him, the quaintest, I imagine, is that I heard from the lips of a Japanese professor in the late Nineties. He belonged to a school, then rather influential, with an enthusiasm for a sort of atheistic Christianity. People were beginning to talk about horseless carriages and wireless telegraphy. These eminent Orientals desired a Godless Religion and a Creedless Faith. They rejected all Christian dogma as a superstition not less fantastic than the wildest perversion of Taoism. They held that Darwin and Herbert Spencer had between them solved the whole riddle of the universe. They took, indeed, ground not very dissimilar to that now occupied by certain dignitaries of the Church. But they recommended, on what they considered practical grounds, the adoption of Christianity (carefully deprived of everything conflicting with the scientific notions of the time) as the State religion of the Japanese Empire. In the first place such a conversion, it was held, would remove one great obstacle to the full admission of Japan to the comity of European nations ; in the second, it would provide the lower classes with a moral standard and motive superior to

anything afforded by the Eastern religions in their decline.

Now it so happened that Mr. Gladstone, when eighty-five or so, was mentioned in the Japanese papers as having spent five hours of a Good Friday in public worship. For this he was praised, on grounds not a little singular, by the curious Evangelist I have mentioned. It was impossible, said the professor, for a man of such brilliant intellect to have any real belief in the religion he professed. Mr. Gladstone, of course, was in his heart of hearts as little a Christian as Professor Huxley. But, while Professor Huxley viewed great questions only from the standpoint of a scientist, Mr. Gladstone was a great practical statesman, who recognised that the vulgar could only be kept in their places by due awe of the supernatural. Therefore, like a true patriot, he endured at his great age this serious fatigue (to say nothing of this unutterable boredom) in order that he might give an example to the masses. This (the professor proceeded) was the true source of England's greatness ; her public men, instead of spending their spare time in frivolity, kept ever in mind the necessity of preserving appearances in the presence of the proletariat ; and the quiet and law-abiding character of the British people was their exceeding great reward.

It was no use arguing with this learned Japanese ; indeed, he was a man so illustrious that disputation with him, on the part of a nobody, seemed to savour of presumption. But I remembered enough of the spectacle of Mr. Gladstone at public worship (during one of his many visits to Brighton at the time of his last Premiership) to be very cautious ever afterwards in attempting to classify the motives of a foreigner. For, if there was one man in England for whom religion was a reality, it was Mr. Gladstone. And if there was one man in England incapable of the altruistic hypocrisy imputed to him it was again Mr.

Gladstone. He was even destitute of that knack of saying pleasant insincerities which is generally reckoned as very little of a sin and very much of a social asset. Witness that old story of Disraeli and the pictures. Someone told Mr. Gladstone with great glee how Disraeli went to some picture show, and delighted the artists by most lavish praise. This work showed sublime genius ; that recalled the grace of Gainsborough ; this the sombre power of Carravaggio ; that the splendid colour of Titian ; that the severe purity of outline of Mantegna. And then, when Disraeli was well clear of the men he had flattered into frantic worship of him, he murmured to a friend : " What an ordeal ; such fearful daubs I never saw ! " To this story Mr. Gladstone listened with a steadily increasing frown, and at the end of it he struck the table emphatically with his fist. " I call that—*devilish*," was his comment.

It was, probably, this massive seriousness—deriving from his intense sense of the eternal—that was the secret of Mr. Gladstone's power over nearly all who came into close touch with him. It is not quite true that he altogether lacked a sense of humour. In a certain vein he could be playful and even jocose, and, though he was generally wanting in the compression which belongs to true wit, witty things occasionally escaped him. But all this was by the way, as incidental as the play of sunlight on a rock or the laughter on the surface of the deep sea ; he might, in an off moment, play with an idea in much the same spirit that he took his backgammon with Mr. Armistead, but such concessions to the mood of the moment only threw into sharper relief the intense earnestness which was the basis of his character.

Every virtue has its characteristic dangers, and if Mr. Gladstone's solemn belief in himself and his mission gave him immense power over others it also led to one side of himself exercising too much power

over the other. His intellect was often unduly dominated by his prepossessions ; from first to last he seldom saw things in a dry light. In his youth Macaulay noted a characteristic which endured throughout life—content with insecure foundations for an argument, he relied too much for victory on his splendid power of impressive rhetoric. He was not the less governed by prejudice because his prejudice might at one time be different from, and even contradictory to, his prejudice at another. Had Mr. Gladstone been a duller man, his temper would have ended by enfeebling the mind which it constantly reduced to subjection. But in his case a mentality already almost preternaturally active was still further stimulated by the necessity of justifying his temper. It was driven to a kind of jesuitry through the despotic conscientiousness of its master. Mr. Gladstone was incapable of consciously deceiving others ; he did sometimes unconsciously deceive himself, and others through himself. On certain questions, like finance, which he could treat objectively, his reason had full play ; on others his judgment was always liable to subjective disturbance. Where a broad and definite moral issue existed that judgment seldom went astray, but on whole classes of questions more or less indifferent he was governed by the same sort of likes and dislikes which determine a rich man's wine cellar or picture collection. Thus half his mistakes in regard to Egypt were due to nothing more than want of interest. He was bored with Egypt, and intrigued with other things. Ireland, also, at first bored him ; it was to him, as to so many of the Liberals, a tiresome irrelevancy breaking in on the set programme. For some time he felt towards the Irish members as a whist-player might towards some noisy person who insisted that there must be no more whist until everybody in the room had exhausted the possibilities of " tiddleywinks." But when at last he

found that " tiddleywinks " was only a slang name for Irish auction bridge, and that Irish auction bridge was vastly more exciting than any whist, he quickly discovered that the enunciation of a Home Rule policy was what Mr. Balfour called " a moral imperative of the most binding kind."

This would seem a flippant explanation of a conversion in which Mr. Gladstone renewed his political youth. It is not meant as a flippancy. Most assuredly Mr. Gladstone did not consciously, as some very great opponents maintained at the time, reach his Home Rule position by the road of sordid or ignoble considerations. But his mind was one equally prone to innovation and to routine ; it ran in grooves, but had no difficulty, when impelled by any sufficiently powerful stimulus, in jumping from one groove to another. There is a kind of roundabout on which the horses (running on rigidly prescribed lines) seem at one moment to be going straight to a certain point, and then suddenly turn, to the bewilderment of their riders, in a direction exactly opposite. Mr. Gladstone made such a swerve, and it was not surprising that there were tumbles, or that, while he was eloquently explaining that the change of course was natural and necessary, less agile characters were mainly swearing over bumps and bruises. He himself was probably not even conscious that the change was great. For Mr. Gladstone had a way of making himself at once at home in a new situation. He was like a man who often changes his house, but always carries with him the old furniture and—if possible—the old servants. The chief trouble in this case was that some of the household staff declined to join in the new move ; otherwise Erin Mansions was not very different from Coercion Row. There was point, if there was also rudeness, in Lord Randolph's gibe of " the old man in a hurry." But the hurry was chiefly in the matter of settling down in the new quarters. Once settled

Mr. Gladstone never again moved. Under all the superficial bustle of his last Premiership there was essential immobility; what he had become in 1885 he remained till the end.

Of the "rapid splendours" of that last Home Rule fight Lord Morley has discoursed eloquently. It was a wonderful affair, and a most pathetic one. The eloquence which had dazzled two generations had lost little or nothing of its magnificence. The wizardry of Mr. Gladstone's manipulations of stubborn material still extorted the admiration of those who had known him a quarter of a century before. Half blind, very deaf, dependent on majorities that sometimes sank to eight or ten, faced with the certainty of rejection by the Lords, and the equal certainty that their action would be approved by the country, the old hero never faltered. It was a marvellous and inspiring example of the triumph of a sense of public duty over all the disabilities of age and infirmity. But through the whole splendid performance ran the note of tragedy. Mr. Gladstone knew the thing could not be done by him. He must have more than suspected what was to come when he was gone. The portent of the Newcastle programme could no more have been lost on him than the waning enthusiasm of many of his supporters for the cause of Home Rule. But for the faith which had always sustained him, this last fight must have been sad indeed. "But," says Lord Morley, speaking of a visit just before Mr. Gladstone's last appearance in the House of Commons, "there the old fellow was, doing what old fellows have done for long ages on a Sunday afternoon, reading a big Bible." The same witness speaks of a "sudden solemnity" during the discussion of an intricate point in the Home Rule Bill, when Mr. Gladstone turned to him with "Take it from me, that to endure trampling on with patience and self-control is no bad element in the preparation of a man for

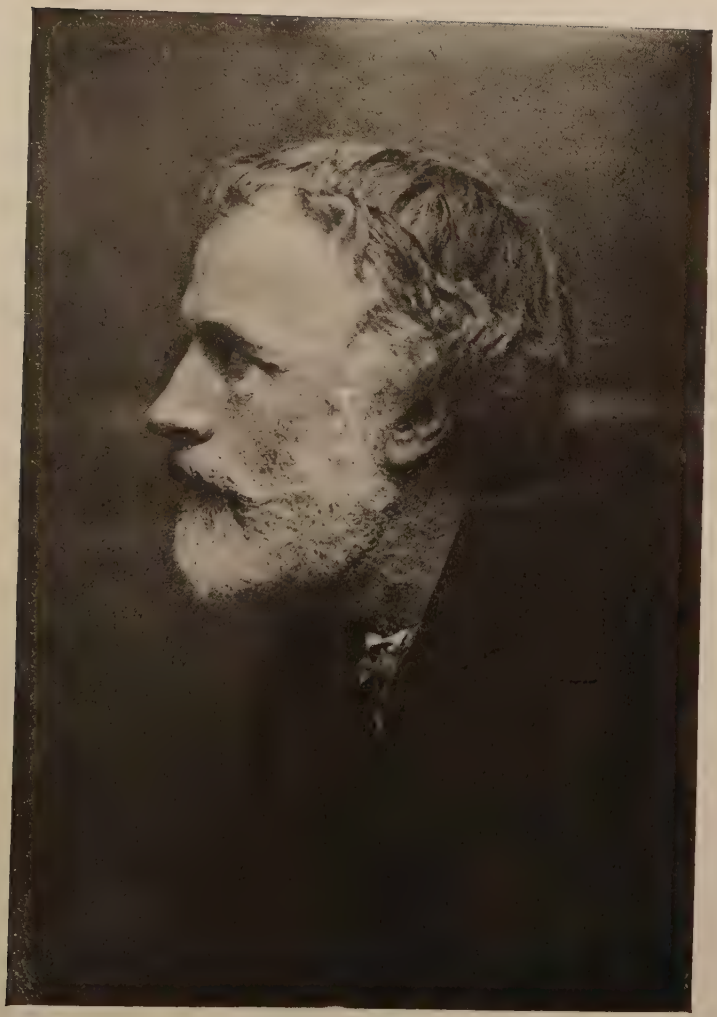
walking firmly and successfully in the path of great public duty. Be sure that discipline is full of blessings." Then, a moment later, he added, " When it's all over, you and I must have our controversy out about Horace. I cannot put him as high as you do."

After all, no man is to be pitied who could bear the weight of eighty-four years in a spirit at once so humanly gallant and so Christianly resigned.

CHAPTER V

GEORGE MEREDITH

GEORGE MEREDITH was impatient of talk about life's ironies ; he took things as they came, accepted Fate's decrees with fortitude, and did not blame Nature for being natural. That is to say, he took up this attitude in debate ; internally he might and did lament over things not specially lamentable. And, whatever he might say, he can hardly have failed to feel something of the irony of his position in the Nineties. He had won through long years of total neglect and hard toil. He had passed the hardly less painful period of purely esoteric appreciation. First, nobody cared for his work ; then he became the oracle of a small circle ; neither fate was pleasing to a nature so large and eager, so avid of fame, with so keen a zest for life, and so imperious an appetite for its best things, material and intellectual. George Meredith liked recognition ; he liked also good and even fat living, old vintages, pleasant lodgment, and ease of mind. He wrote best about the sunshine when he saw it through a glass of fine claret, and lark pie was for him the best preparation for an ode to the lark. But it was long before he could afford to translate into practice his theories of good provender. In his youth, it is said, he was so poor that a single bowl of porridge had often to suffice him for the day, and long after he had reached maturity he was so little esteemed that John Morley, coming to London ten years his junior, was soon able to repay his generous



GEORGE MEREDITH.

welcome by printing two or three novels which would otherwise have stood small chance with the publishers. In his later middle age, though he could afford himself fairly full indulgence in those dietetic fantasies which were his joy, he was so harnessed to the daily task that he could not imagine, so he said, what he would do if turned loose in the paddock of independence. But now in the Nineties and his own sixties, just as he had grown into a cult, he had to live as a recluse at Box Hill, almost a prisoner in his armchair, very deaf, and with an impaired digestion.

Concerning that " Egyptian bondage " of journalism, all Meredith's philosophy could not prevent him expressing himself with extreme bitterness. " No slavery," he said, " is comparable to the chains of hired journalism." When a man talks thus it is natural to infer that he is complaining of the injury such work does to his intellect and conscience ; obviously from the purely physical viewpoint writing for newspapers, for some hundreds a year in Victorian valuation, is not worse than being an Egyptian fellah, a Chinese coolie, or even an English dustman. But it is hard to believe that even on the moral and intellectual side there was much hardship ; for, curiously enough, George Meredith was rather specially free from scruples of the kind which torture some men. Indeed, he was unusually wide-minded in the matter of " writing to order " ; in that sense, at least, the chains hung lightly on him. There have always been journalists of great and even boisterous independence, and they were more numerous in Meredith's time than in our own. Even now, however, the idea of the refined and penniless man of genius working against his convictions under the lash of a brutal and tyrannous proprietor belongs not to Fleet Street, where they produce newspapers, but to the Haymarket, where they produce plays. Doubtless there is a good deal of compliance in matters

indifferent, or esteemed indifferent. Men with very red noses have been known to argue eloquently in favour of local option, and nothing but total abstinence is compatible with the coolness of head requisite for some arguments in favour of "the trade." But, as mere men of business, newspaper proprietors save themselves, wherever possible, the strain of attempting to force a highly individual writer against his convictions. Mr. Massingham has never had to choose between no dinner and the advocacy of causes likely to appeal to the editor of *John Bull*. Mr. Bottomley has never been compelled by hunger to adopt the views of the United Kingdom Alliance or the Anti-Betting League. But Meredith did indubitably, as a Liberal, write habitually for the political columns of the Conservative *Morning Post* in London and the Conservative *Ipswich Journal* in the provinces; as a professed lover of liberty he did indubitably argue in favour of slavery; and, if all the secrets of the files were revealed, it would probably be found that, as a literary critic, he said many things in print which were contrary to his private taste and conviction.

His disgust with journalism was, it may be surmised, less concerned with morals than with money. He complains that the better the work the worse the pay, and the poorer the esteem; and, just as he could not refrain from some envy of the "best sellers" in literature (an envy which found vent in savage criticism of much of Tennyson's work), so he was not a little disgusted that many journalists far less gifted made better incomes. In truth he was not suited to the trade. The best in journalism is still for the many, and Meredith's manner, when all is said, was for the few. With the prestige of a name behind his books, the average of men might be induced (if only by the coward fear of being out of the fashion) to begin reading, and, having begun, it was always

quite possible that he would go on long enough to find much that he could honestly like. But anonymous writing has no such advantage. Its appeal must be immediate, or the reader turns to the next column. With his peculiar tendencies George Meredith could never have been a journalist of the kind that delights the editorial soul—the man who never under-writes or over-writes either in space or quality, who can always be depended on to produce a first-class trade article, who never uses an expression queried by the printer's reader. The highest merit of the journalist is to make complicated things clear, and dry things readable ; Meredith's genius lay in the direction of making the simplest things obscure, and the most ordinary things out-of-the-way. The dread of being common-place seems to have inclined him especially to verbal contortions when he was conscious of some thinness or ordinariness of thought. When he has really something to say he often says it strongly and naturally ; there are deep things and true things in Meredith which could hardly be better, more shortly, or more lucidly expressed. Browning suffered from much the same disease ; with both men it is quite a safe rule to read only so long as one can get on comfortably ; skipping the hard parts means a gain altogether out of proportion to the loss. Meredith is never more obscure than when he means to tell one that a man kissed a woman, or that the sky was red at sunset. Men do quite commonly kiss women, and skies are often red at sunset. But Meredith seems to have felt that his men must be different from any other men, their kisses different from any other kisses, and the women kissed different from any other kissed women. And on no account must his sunsets be the sunsets of Tom, Dick, or Harry. Therefore, in dealing with such things, he racked his brain for some verbal violence which sometimes hit the mark, but more often did not. In one of his short poems—

published, if I remember rightly, in the Nineties—there occurred the expression, " Hands that paw the naked bush." I asked a Meredithian exactly what it meant. Pityingly he reminded me that some lines before there were references to winter and snow. " Now," he said, " if you have closely observed a bush when the leaves are off, you will remember that here and there twigs, to the number of four or five, radiate from a sort of clump which bears a distant resemblance to the human wrist. When these twigs are covered with snow they distinctly suggest a hand with the fingers spread out. The poet saw that, as he saw everything. You, who never use your middle-class eyes except to find misprints, naturally never saw it, and you dare to charge your own insensitiveness and lack of imagination on a great genius." This, of course, was crushing. But I can imagine an Elizabethan man of taste being equally crushing to any heretic who questioned some elaborate figure of the Ephuists, and appealed from them to the simple delicacy of him who wrote—

> " And winking Mary-buds begin
> To ope their golden eyes "—

a thing any critic can admire and any coal-heaver can understand.

" Meredith," says Lord Morley, " often missed ease." It might be truer to say that he took the most cruel pains to avoid ease. Macaulay notices how Johnson used sometimes to translate into his own peculiar dialect an observation first made in strong, simple English. Thus he once said that a certain work had not " enough wit to keep it sweet," and immediately added, " It has not sufficient vitality to preserve it from putrefaction." One has an uneasy feeling that Macaulay was, as sometimes happened, a little innocent in his earnestness to make a point, and that Johnson was here only playing with himself ;

his ordinary literary style, though stiff as compared with his table talk, is yet generally muscular and masculine. But Meredith actually did in solemn fashion what Johnson may have done in a spirit of fooling. He did continually think in a natural and write in an unnatural idiom. In his familiar letters one often comes across the germ of a reflection later elaborated in a book ; in the one case it is expressed in terse, vigorous English, wholly intelligible and to the point ; in the other it is tortured into two pages of Meredithian " epigram," most of which would be incomprehensible if he did not generally clinch the whole thing with one splendid sentence of quite undoubtful meaning. In these key sentences, indeed, resides the whole value of Meredith—if we exclude a certain embarrassing impression of disorderly opulence, of careless magnificence, which makes one feel rather like a boy with a great jar of " chow-chow " from Canton ; he has not a vestige of an idea what he is eating, and hardly knows whether he quite likes it, but it is sweet, obviously expensive, and provocatively curious, and has a certain medicinal suggestion that excuses a little gluttony. Or we might say that a Meredith novel suggests a great firework display, meant to represent " Peace and War," or " Ali Baba and the Forty Thieves," or " Grand Attack on a Sleeping City by Ten Thousand Aeroplanes." One does not pretend to follow the story as if it were a piece on the stage, and much of it seems to be irrelevant ; but there are plenty of bombs, squibs and Roman candles, and rockets that go up with a satisfying rush and break into floating glory.

As he was in his books, so was Meredith in society. In the company of an intimate friend or two he could be natural—could talk with easy vigour, expressing views that were often just in language that was always plain and strong. But let a stranger—especially a distinguished stranger—join the circle, and

he deviated automatically into "epigram." He seems to have felt it necessary to be brilliant, and for him brilliance meant effort; he was not content to let the good things come to the surface as they would, but pumped them up from the recesses of his being with an energy which sometimes affected the purity of the flow and not seldom made the machinery creak.

There was, indeed, something a little forced about the whole man. In his youth he was addicted to violent exercise, and especially to throwing the beetle—the great wooden mallet with which foresters split tree-trunks. He used to throw up the beetle and catch it, and this violent business, designed to preserve his health, ended by ruining it; the spinal weakness from which he suffered in later life was the direct consequence of beetle-throwing. This indiscreet athleticism is paralleled in other departments of Meredith's life. In literature he was perpetually throwing the beetle—juggling in ponderous style with ponderous things; he is a muscular rather than a nimble wit. I remember to have seen an acrobat climb down a table leg, hand over hand, as if he were lowering himself from the Nelson Monument—a difficult feat, no doubt, but a very useless and ungainly one. Meredith's cleverness gave often the same impression of wasted power and even compromised dignity. In life, again, he tended to this exaggerated strenuousness without adequate object; it might have been better for him, and for others, if there had been more repose. His first marriage was wrecked because he came into contact and conflict with a temperament too like his own, and the sequel proved that his generally benevolent and kindly nature had a core of hardness which might in truth be suspected from his writings. Concerning Carlyle's matrimonial affairs, he wrote that "a woman of the placid disposition of Milton's Eve, framed by her master to be an honest labourer's cook and housekeeper, with a

nervous disposition resembling a dumpling, would have been enough for him." Much the same was true of himself. If, in spite of much domestic sorrow, he reached old age unbroken in his resolute optimism, his deficiencies have perhaps no less credit than his qualities. For, if he sometimes indulged in self-pity regarding small matters, he bore with great stoicism the sterner buffets of fate, and this because of a certain insensibility, illustrated again and again in his career, to the kind of wounds which are commonly most painful. It is not indifference to others, still less hardness of heart ; his letters are evidence enough on that point. But one has the same sort of impression one gets from Shakespeare's sonnets, of a second self quietly watching, and almost jeering at, the sufferings of the first and its mates. " Happily for me," he wrote during his second wife's hopeless and painful illness, " I have learned to live much in the spirit." That was probably the exact truth. Things of the spirit were not always more important than the want of five pounds for a dinner or a holiday, but they did suffice to keep him taut and resolute in the presence of the sterner trials. " There was good reason," says Lord Morley, " to be sure with him that death too was only a thing in the Natural Order." It is only fair to add that he himself faced the approach of the " pitch-black king " with full gallantry. " Going quickly down," he said to his old friend not long before the end, but there was " nothing morbid, introspective, pseudo-pathetic ; plenty of hearty laughter ; . . ." " no belief in a future existence ; are our dogs and horses immortal ? What's become of all our fathers ? "

Such was the strength of the man. But oddly mingled with the intrepid assurance that could mock at invalidism and decay, and look with untroubled eye into the dark unknown, was a strange sensitiveness which he himself would have been the first to satirise

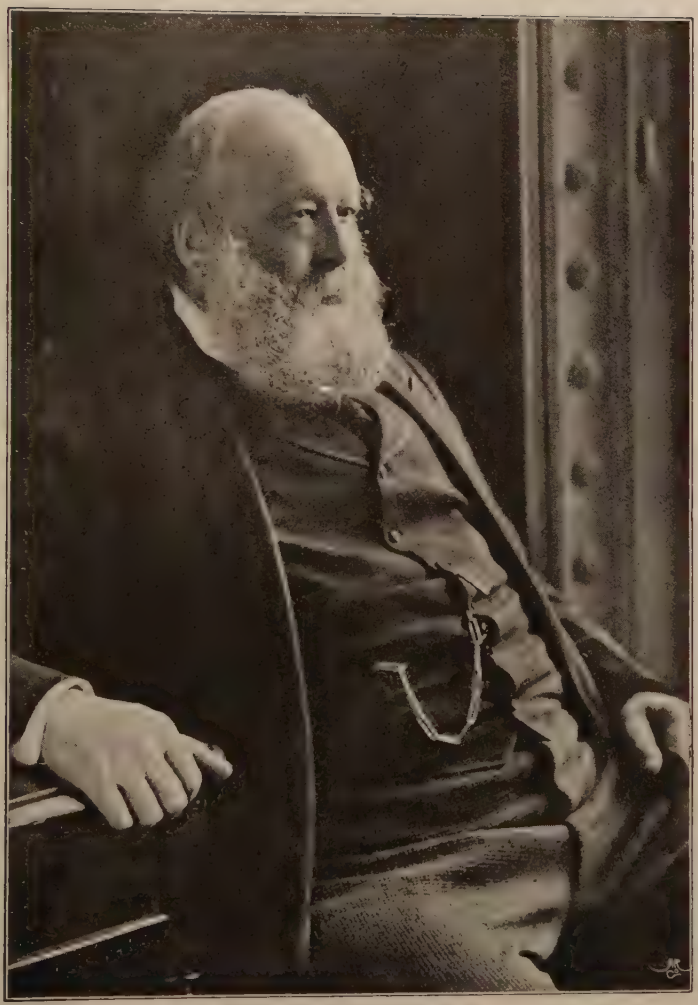
in another. All his life he was tortured with the consciousness that his father and grandfather had been tailors, and oppressed with a fear that somebody would discover the dread secret. He made of his origin a mystery which might pique but always baffled curiosity ; and he was continually wondering whether people considered him a gentleman *de facto*, and still more whether they suspected that he had not always been one *de jure*. " H—— is a good old boy," he writes on one occasion. " He has a pleasant way of being inquisitive, and has already informed me, quite agreeably, that I am a gentleman, though I may not have been born one." " In origin," he says again, " I am what is called here a nobody, and any pretensions to that rank have always received due encouragement." He not only kept silence about his birth—which was assuredly his own affair—but he took active steps to prevent the truth being known. His father—a handsome, shiftless person who made a failure of his life—was described in Meredith's first marriage certificate as " Esquire," and in a census paper " near Petersfield " was given as the author's place of birth. The Merediths were, in fact, naval outfitters at Portsmouth, and had none of the " Celtic blood " to which the novelist was fond of making vague claim. George's mother died when he was five ; the father followed after various ineffective wanderings ; and the boy was left a ward in Chancery, to be educated and articled to a solicitor out of the poor remnant of the family fortunes. From all this part of his life he shrank with a horror at once grotesque and pathetic. There was nothing specially ignominious in his childhood. There was certainly no ill-treatment ; he was rather petted than otherwise. But he resented the environment thrust on him by the accident of birth, and, when free of it, avoided all touch with his remaining relatives.

These facts would not be worth mentioning but for their influence on Meredith's life and work. They placed him in general society rather on the defensive, and perhaps encouraged that haughty shyness which in the presence of strangers was apt to take the form of an aggressive and self-conscious brilliance. They explain the peculiar impression given by so many of his novels, the impression of a man fascinated by aristocracy and yet a little angry at being fascinated. Despite his Liberalism and his Democratic professions, this was the thing he liked ; he had an almost sensual pleasure in good company ; the very titles of his great people suggest enjoyment. He himself was an aristocrat in physique ; he had a kingly head and carried it like a king. He was an aristocrat also in intellect, though here not of the highest rank, which takes its distinction for granted ; it was, no doubt, a dread of commonness that led him to refine excessively, and no one who dreads to be common wholly escapes being so. But all this was not solely Meredith's fault, it was also the fault of his country. In the France of the fleur-de-lis or the France of the tricolour the lack of birth would not have irked such a nature ; in Victorian England it became a fact of real importance. It was the one little insanity of a rather specially sane mind ; the one want of humour in a richly humorous temperament ; the one absurd weakness in one perhaps even too confident in his own strength.

CHAPTER VI

LORD SALISBURY

IN the Berlin Conference days Bismarck described Lord Salisbury as " a lath painted to look like iron." By the Nineties the sneer had lost point in every particular. To the dullest it was clear that Lord Salisbury had not painted himself or got himself painted ; whatever the man might or might not be, he was genuine, incapable himself of pose, and equally incapable of inspiring others to spread a legend concerning himself. It was equally clear (though perhaps only to the more discerning) that he did not " look like iron." There was not wanting strength of a kind, but it was a flexible and not a rigid strength. The coarsest of all mistakes it is possible to make concerning Lord Salisbury is that of regarding him as an Imperialistic swashbuckler and gambler, ready for all risks in the pursuit of a " spirited foreign policy." The Victorian Burleigh was, in fact, much like the Burleigh of Elizabeth, decisive enough in some domestic matters, but even excessively cautious in the conduct of foreign affairs. Though he adopted the Disraelian tradition, his methods were the very opposite of Mr. Disraeli's. That great man really enjoyed having the eyes of all men directed on him in hope or fear. " A daring pilot in extremity," he seemed actually pleased with waves that went high, and, though he might accept " peace with honour," gave always the impression of disappointment of a born political artist that it was not reserved to him to play the part of a second Chatham.



LORD SALISBURY.

Lord Salisbury, on the other hand, was in essence as pacific as Mr. Gladstone. In practice he was even more a man of peace, since his caution took the form of guarding against war, while Mr. Gladstone inclined rather to the modern " Pacifist " line of calling war " unthinkable "—and not thinking about it till it came. There were, no doubt, occasions on which Lord Salisbury's attitude might seem aggressive and even reckless. He was severe to Portugal. He was stern and unbending to the South African Republic. He adopted a high tone towards France over the Fashoda affair. But in such cases he either regarded the risk as small, or considered the matters at stake justified the risk, whatever it might be. In general his policy was one of cautious conciliation, and his main work at the Foreign Office was the removal, so far as might be, of any causes of quarrel between ourselves and Germany. The German Empire he equally feared and admired. France he was inclined to class with Spain among the " dying nations," and though, like all the men of his school, he rather exaggerated the might of Russia, that Power was considered more from the Asiatic than from the European point of view. Lord Salisbury's policy towards France and Russia was fluid and opportunist. He had no objection to France taking what she liked of the " light soil " of the Sahara ; he was not intolerant of Russian ambitions in Eastern Asia. He was anxious enough not to be on bad terms with anybody. But if either of these Powers had thrown out an obvious challenge Lord Salisbury would no doubt have accepted it. The one challenge he was resolved not to accept was that of Germany, and the history of the later Salisbury administrations on their foreign side is in essence the history of elaborate attempts to buy, as cheaply as possible, a continuance of the sleeping partnership with Prussia. The price was not onerous during Bismarck's reign. It rose sharply

under William II, and Lord Salisbury died in the unhappy certainty that all his attempts to satisfy Germany had failed of their purpose. The failure was no fault of his. He had carried through in Africa—a continent " created," as he said at the Guildhall banquet of the Diamond Jubilee year, " to be the plague of the Foreign Office "—a network of treaties and compacts not ill-designed to avert the possibility of serious wars arising from the unregulated ambitions of European Powers. But there was more passion than policy in the councils of Berlin, and, to his deep chagrin, Lord Salisbury was fated to see, before his life ended, the first steps taken towards a complete reversal of the course he had consistently followed.

If Lord Salisbury was neither " painted " nor " like iron," the third element in the Bismarckian sneer was still more untrue. In the Nineties it was quite impossible to think of the Conservative leader as a " lath." The slenderness of Lord Robert Cecil had gone the same way as his rather ungainly deportment ; the developing statesman had shown how little youth and spareness of figure may have to do with grace ; the developed statesman illustrated what the author of *Eothen* calls the majesty of true corpulence. In Lord Robert Cecil great height, slimness, and the scholar's stoop made rather jarringly noticeable that untidiness which is an abiding Cecilian characteristic ; in Lord Salisbury the rounded shoulders rather added to his impressiveness, as suggesting Atlas loads of responsibility, while the very massiveness of the figure cancelled the effect of imperfect valeting. No worse dressed or more majestic figure was ever seen in the House of Lords, which has never been wanting either in shabbiness or in distinction. There are some men of great rank who convey the impression of taking as keen an interest in their kit as that which animates any shop assistant out for his Sunday. There are

others who give the air of caring little personally about such matters, but of having an excellent man to look after them. Lord Salisbury suggested a tailor and valet as little interested in clothes as himself. His coats always looked as if they had been made on the Laputan system of tailoring ; his trousers bagged like those in the statues of Victorian philanthropists ; his hats were shocking ; he even looked sometimes as if he might have slept in his clothes. Indeed, though the last man on earth to be a conscious Bohemian, there was a considerable streak of Bohemianism in Lord Salisbury. In his Fleet Street days he had no difficulty in accommodating himself to the ways of a race still carrying on the tradition of George Warrington and Mr. Bludyer. Lord Morley, who sometimes met him in the waiting-room of a review editor, found in him a " gift of silence." But *The Standard* had, apparently, a more human atmosphere, and with some of the distinguished writers enlisted under the banner of Mr. Mudford, the future Prime Minister established genial relations. Many years after, a fellow-leader-writer was presented to him at some official garden party. Lord Salisbury, who had a bad memory for names, and was very short-sighted, was saying the usual formal things when the sound of the journalist's voice suddenly brought a flood of old memories. " Hello, Billy," he said, shaking hands warmly, " whose turn is it to pay for the beer ? "

Lord Salisbury's shortness of sight is the explanation of the many true stories of his not knowing his own subordinates, and talking to a sporting Peer about military matters under the impression that he was addressing Lord Roberts. This myopia was a very considerable element in his life, and accounts in some degree for a detachment which appeared marvellous to his contemporaries. Not being able to see his audiences, he could not follow their moods, and so

tended exclusively to follow his own. Thus no man merited less the title of orator. There was a fine literary quality about his speeches ; though he prepared little, and spoke without effort, the fighting discipline of his journalistic days made banality or sloppiness impossible to him. The satire which seldom failed to flavour anything he said was the quite natural emanation of an ironical mind, and sprang from the same source as his dislike of declamation, display, or vulgar rhetorical artifice. It was not what is generally called cynicism ; it was rather the protest of a strong, sincere, and unaffected nature against the humbug rarely absent from public life. Bad taste, really bad taste, that is to say—the taste which, to vary the French phrase, leads to artistic crime—was repulsive to him, and this dislike no doubt sometimes led him to what is more ordinarily called bad taste : the merciless mockery of pretensions which most people have agreed to respect. Detesting exaggerated emphasis, he exaggerated his own avoidance of it ; he habitually spoke without gesture, generally standing motionless as an automaton, his hands hanging lifelessly at his side. In this position he used, as he called it, to " think aloud," and his thoughts often sounded strangely both to friends and opponents. For, though Lord Salisbury was a real Tory, the tone of his mind was only in one limited sense conservative. He did want to preserve certain great things, including, of course, the Church, but he had little in common with those who oppose an equally stubborn resistance to all innovation. The doors of his understanding were never closed to the entry of new ideas, so long as such ideas were concrete and definite ; what he did vehemently resent was " reform " demanded on loose general grounds. Thus he had no great objection to Parish Councils. True, the old system had worked fairly well, and very cheaply, and nobody could tell exactly how ill and dearly the new system

would work. But if due cause were shown, he was not disposed to stand in the way. When, however, the Liberal leaders argued for Parish Councils, not on the ground that they would be more efficient or more economical than the old Vestries, but that they would tend to "brighten village life," Lord Salisbury's disgust flamed out in a characteristic piece of irony. "If the enlivenment of village life were the object," he said, "the object would be much better served by a circus." Again, he was assuredly not blind to the evils of over-drinking. But he denied altogether that the way to make men sober was to make public-houses fewer and less convenient. There had been much argument in favour of "reducing drinking facilities"; Lord Salisbury contended that drunkenness was no necessary consequence of drinking facilities. "There are a hundred beds at Hatfield," he said, "but I never feel more inclined to sleep on that account."

It is probable, indeed, that what he chiefly hated in Liberalism was that tendency to unreality which is, perhaps, its special danger. Lord Salisbury did not see a great many things, but what he did see he saw clearly, and he was specially free from the dangers of self-deception. Thus he did not see that there was an Irish question; but he did see quite clearly what Mr. Gladstone would not let himself see, that there was no English enthusiasm for Home Rule. He did not see that political arrangements wanted readjusting in correspondence with the immense material and intellectual revolution in England; but he did see quite clearly that the English people on the whole preferred a squiredom to a plutocracy, and were not in the least concerned when the House of Lords disposed of various pet projects of hasty reformers. When Liberals talked about the voice of the people and the aspirations of the masses, Lord Salisbury did not think of the people or the masses; he thought of

a single working-man he had actually seen and spoken to, and, judging the rest from him, was at least secured against the worst hallucinations. When some proposal (say Local Veto) was extolled as a boon to the working-classes, Lord Salisbury again saw in his mind's eye a quite ordinary bricklayer or carpenter in a village tavern, and in the strength of that vision declined to believe that England would rise against him as one man if the Lords threw out Local Veto on his suggestion. Proceeding on these lines, he developed an infallible pose for political imposture and pretence, and a massive disregard of merely noisy agitation. No man ever paid less attention to the transient manifestations of what is called public opinion. He was utterly unmoved by the thunders of the Press and the organised outcry of the platform. When a great procession marched past Arlington Street to Hyde Park to denounce him, he could ask his footman (quite sincerely) " What all that noise was about ? " The petulant threats of a disappointed faction, the interested uproar of sects and cliques, made no impression on his colossal phlegm. But he recognised at once what he called " the firm, deliberate, and sustained conviction " of the majority of the nation. " It is no courage—it is no dignity—to withstand the real opinion of the nation," so he said in 1868, after leading a most determined opposition to the Irish Church Bill. " All that you are doing thereby is to delay an inevitable issue—for all history teaches us that no nation was ever thus induced to revoke its own decision—and to invoke besides a period of disturbance, discontent, and possibly worse than discontent." Thus, while he understood when to fight, he also understood when to yield, and his concessions, when he decided to make them, came with grace and spontaneity. The sword of the House of Lords was often raised to kill ; it was sometimes used to salute ; it was never shaken in unavailing menace.

The peculiar strength and sagacity of Lord Salisbury as a domestic statesman are best illustrated, not by what happened during his life, but by what followed his death. For it was the chief part of his success that nothing particularly happened at home while he was in chief control. The real history of the time is foreign, colonial, social, and technological history. In English political history we are mainly in the region of negatives. Lord Salisbury did not solve the Irish political problem; he only stifled down an Irish agitation. He did not solve the English social problem; he only avoided unnecessary troubling of the waters. He did not make his party the instrument of any great positive work for England; he only kept it together as the guarantee of stable administration. But the magnitude of even this negative success was seen by the sharp contrast of what followed. Within a year of his retirement the Conservative Party was shattered; within a decade everything he had striven to avoid had come to pass; Home Rule was again a living issue; the lists were set for a real battle between the House of Commons and the House of Lords; the division of England into "classes and masses" was almost complete; the Church was marked down for what he would have considered a sacrilegious mutilation. English Toryism in the true sense died with Lord Salisbury. The thing that succeeded had no convenient name, but its character may be best indicated by saying that what was specially English was not specially Tory, and what was specially Tory was not specially English. But, while the inspiration and effective control of the party passed to men without interest in Church or land, and with a cosmopolitan (or at least most loosely Imperialist) rather than an English or even British point of view, many true Tories remained. These must have recognised, when Lord Salisbury had gone, the true value of much that

had been taken for granted while he was alive. He originated little ; he delayed much that was good as well as much that was ill ; he belonged emphatically to that class of great men who must be praised rather for what they avoided than for what they accomplished. But that he was a truly great man, and not a merely dexterous one, was now clear to those who witnessed the disaster wrought by a deficiency of character combined with an excess of ideas and tactical subtlety. Had Lord Salisbury been succeeded by another in precisely his own image, the political and social convulsions of the new century would, doubtless, not have been altogether avoided. For there were forces at work that compelled large changes. But that they would have come about in gentler fashion is hardly doubtful. For Lord Salisbury knew as few men did the difference between variable " public opinion " and the real temper of a nation, between the ditch that can be filled up or drained and the river which can only be canalised, and he would assuredly have avoided that constitutional struggle which, degenerating into mere anarchism, became the prolific parent of so many ills from which the country suffers to-day. It was a misfortune for more than Conservatism that his massive wisdom, his shrewd judgment, his cool scepticism, his contempt of mere ideas, his horror of extremes, his hatred of any kind of cant and self-illusion, his distrust of zeal and prejudice against the needless enlargement of issues were not at the service of the Conservative Party at a time when it needed above all things sane and strong control.

CHAPTER VII

LORD KITCHENER

AT the battle of Omdurman, fought on September 2, 1898, the Dervishes had 10,800 killed and some 16,000 wounded; the losses of the British and Egyptian forces amounted to only 47 killed and 342 wounded.

This fact must be borne in mind in considering the character of that enormous Kitchener legend which grew up—or rather started up almost in a single night—late in the Nineties. At the beginning of the decade the name of Herbert Kitchener conveyed nothing to people outside an extremely narrow military and diplomatic circle; a year or two later vague rumours of some extremely capable soldier, a discovery of Lord Cromer's, the very man to regain the Sudan and "avenge Gordon," began to circulate; by the middle Nineties the new Sirdar had established a certain definite repute as a strong man who would stand no nonsense from anybody, and who had even terrorised an unfriendly Khedive; in 1896 there began to be talk about the expedition authorised by the Government on Mr. Chamberlain's suggestion; the next two years the papers were at intervals interested in the building of the desert railway which was to be Kitchener's instrument for the reconquest of the Sudan. Then came news, on the Good Friday of 1898, of a considerable victory at the Atbara; and after, for some months, there was almost silence. At last it was gloriously broken. A great battle had been fought and won outside Omdurman, the

mushroom capital of the Khalifa, erected opposite the ruins of Khartoum on the other side of the Nile. The Dervishes had attacked with all their force ; they had been utterly defeated ; and, though the Khalifa and the remnants of his army had got away, his power had evidently been broken for ever. Khartoum was ours, Gordon had been splendidly avenged, and the reign of civilisation in the home of an aggressive barbarism was now assured. Kitchener, who had planned every detail of the business, and had ended it by violating the Mahdi's tomb and throwing the body of the false prophet (parted from his head) into the Nile, suddenly emerged from the status of a comparatively unmarked man to that of the " greatest living soldier."

The first fever had hardly died away when excitement, and with it the renown of the successful General, was intensified by the great irony which is summarised in the word " Fashoda." Kitchener, going forward on the Nile from Omdurman, was met by a small steel rowing-boat, which proved to contain a Senegalese sergeant and two men, charged with a letter from Major Marchand, who had fought his way from the Atlantic to the Upper Nile, and now lay encamped at Fashoda, right on the Cape-to-Cairo line. Major Marchand presented his compliments, congratulated General Kitchener on what he had heard was an uncommonly fine victory, and would be honoured, charmed, and even ravished to welcome him at Fashoda under the shadow of the tricolour.

Here was a pretty kettle of fish, with the prospect of a considerable amount of fat in a truly terrible fire if anything went awry in the cookery. Kitchener had been tested as a soldier ; he was now to prove himself as a diplomatist. Many a British officer and gentleman, charged to the teeth with good form, might have started there and then a European war. But Kitchener, whose manners were sometimes

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sufficiently brusque where his own countrymen were concerned, had very fortunately much tact when dealing with foreigners, and especially when in contact with Frenchmen. He spoke their language not only accurately but with grace and fluency, and it almost seemed as if the use of that idiom dissolved much of the ice which generally abounded in his neighbourhood. During the Great War not his least service was the establishment of thoroughly good relations with the French high command; they not only trusted in him, as one who knew, and knew that they knew, but they liked him. It was not only that they never forgot that he had been a volunteer in the war of 1870, but they discovered in the grim Field-Marshal something more sympathetic than they could find in British officers of ordinarily far more expansive manner. Kitchener, on his part, had no doubt something in excess of the natural interest and friendliness which (other things being equal) most men entertain for foreigners whose language they speak well. He had a real admiration for French qualities in general, a still greater admiration for French military qualities in particular, and an admiration greater still for an individual French soldier so transparently brave and chivalrous as Marchand. "I congratulate you," he said, in shaking hands with the Major, "on all you have accomplished," meaning the terrible march across Africa, in which a fifth of Marchand's little force had perished. "No," was the French soldier's reply, "the credit is not to me, but to these soldiers," pointing to his troops. "Then," said Kitchener in describing the interview, "then I knew he was a gentleman."

It was a difficult business, that of getting the gallant Marchand to consent, helpless as he was, to the replacement of the French by the Egyptian flag. But the thing was done, and done in such a way that, though there might be chagrin, there was no hurt of

that kind that festers in a proud heart: years after Kitchener and Marchand could meet without either feeling the smallest awkwardness. Indeed, not for the first time, soldiers proved themselves better at the diplomat's trade than the diplomats themselves. The real peril of Fashoda was due to the professional speechifiers; and the embitterment of Anglo-French relations, which long survived the formal settlement of this affair, might well have been averted had statesmen, comfortably seated in palace-offices in a northern latitude, imitated the courtesy and restraint of two war-worn and nerve-racked men of war, fretted by the hundred little miseries of one of the most detestable regions of tropical Africa.

It was Omdurman and Fashoda that made the Kitchener legend, and Kitchener's part in the Boer War scarcely added to it. Critics might say that the dispositions at Omdurman were faulty, and that though Kitchener was the prince of military organisers, he was not, and never would be, a great general in the field. The people would not have it. They had made up their mind that he was a great man; they went on thinking he was a great man; and many years later, when behind the scenes every small detractor was sneering at the "Kitchener myth," the general public suffered no smallest shadow of doubt to creep over its full faith in him. He had carried out a clean job cleanly, winding up by a tremendous and final success a business which had been marked by one tragic failure after another. He had achieved, for less money than he had promised to spend, a complete victory, while others had merely added recklessly to the National Debt while subtracting heavily from the national prestige. The critics might say that Kitchener had much luck, that he profited by the efforts of those who preceded him, that means were available for his campaign which were beyond the reach of others. All this was nothing

to the public. They saw a great success, and they honoured the man who had accomplished it, all the more because they had been accustomed to connect with defeat all the place-names in his itinerary of triumph.

But the main point of the whole thing was that summarised in the opening paragraph: "Dervishes, 10,800 killed, 16,000 wounded; British and Egyptians, 47 killed, 342 wounded." Had Kitchener's victory been dear in life the whole glamour of the business would have been absent. For the British people at that time took an interest in war rather like a virtuous spinster's interest in wickedness. They liked to hear about it, to talk about it, to feel the thrill of it. But they did not like it to come too near their own homes. Their idea of a good kind of war was one waged against a barbarous foe on a picturesque far-away terrain; one which would enable the Prime Minister, in proposing the thanks of Parliament to the successful general, to talk about "thin red lines" creeping beside gorges that would appal a Canadian trapper, or scaling mountains which would terrify an Alpine guide, until they had "planted the standard of St. George upon the mountains of Rasselas," or some equally interesting range. They liked the foe to come on bravely but rather injudiciously, and to be "mown down" by machine-guns that never jammed. They liked him to be easily surprised and bamboozled, and then they paid the highest compliments to his "unavailing heroism"; Mr. Kipling probably compensated him with a poem in cockney dialect. But if, declining himself to be surprised and bamboozled, the barbarian succeeded in surprising and bamboozling our own men, we are very apt to describe the ensuing disaster as a "treacherous massacre." It was, perhaps, this dislike of unobliging enemies, no less than our unmixed joy over the disasters of any foreign force in similar

circumstances, that contributed to the want of affection for us on the Continent. However that may be, it is certain that a great part of the popularity of Omdurman was due to the fact that it was an amazingly cheap victory of discipline and apparatus over barbaric and comparatively ill-equipped valour ; and no small degree of Kitchener's prestige was accounted for by the popular comparison of the tiny cost in life of his great feat with the large outlay, in blood as well as in money, of some of his unsuccessful predecessors. The fact was of enormous importance, both in the South African War and later. People always felt that Kitchener could do things by a kind of magic if they were do-able that way, and were thus reconciled to heavy loss when it arrived to troops for which he had responsibility. It was felt that he had no motive but to get results at the very lowest cost ; that he would spare neither himself nor another in pursuing that purpose ; and that no influences of any kind—personal, political, or social—would ever be allowed to interfere with his ideals of military economy and efficiency.

The public, as usual, was perfectly right in its instinct in all matters which it was competent to judge. It was less right, of course, when it attempted to appraise the military genius of Kitchener. Yet it was less wrong, probably, than the professed critics who in the Great War concentrated on the inevitable shortcomings of a man past his prime, in an unfamiliar environment, surrounded by politicians, nervous of public opinion in a country with representative institutions, who had to build up from the beginning the immense organisation needed for such an effort as that to which this country was committed. When all is said of these shortcomings, the fact remains that the only British soldier who foresaw the duration of the war, and the means necessary to bring it to a successful conclusion, was one who had spent only a

few months in Europe since his early manhood, who had never handled white troops on a great scale, and had had no opportunity of applying himself to those problems which had been the lifelong occupation of German and French generals. The marvel was not that Lord Kitchener made mistakes, but that he was able to form so just a judgment of the grand contours of the enormous affair with which he was called at a moment's notice to deal. Judged only by that vast experiment, the greatness of the man is still apparent. But it would be quite unjust so to judge him. The public instinct was correct in fastening on the campaign that culminated at Omdurman as a supreme illustration of his qualities. They were less those a great commander in the field than of a patient planner, plotter, and organiser, a super-sapper and miner, the manager of a great military business. From first to last he was always the engineer, the mathematician, and the business man; and if at the last he appeared less a business man than at the first, it was only because he was that kind of business man who must have all the threads in his own hands, and the threads of the last great business were too numerous for any one pair of hands to hold.

It was not so in the Nineties. Then Kitchener had a measurable task and immeasurable energy; he could do everything himself, and anything that he could do himself was well done. One most authentic proof of his greatness was his choice of instruments; "Kitchener's men" have always shown themselves good for something, and generally good for most things. Another was the manner in which he impressed his personality on all who came near him. It is easy and safe to talk about the absurdity of the "Kitchener myth" in general society; the experience is much more embarrassing when an old officer of Kitchener happens to be present. For the grim man who was so ruthless to incompetence, one might

almost add so cruel to misfortune, the man who treated ill-health as a kind of crime, and marriage as a kind of treason, somehow managed to get himself loved. That part of the Kitchener legend which represented him as without heart or bowels was, indeed, false. He was inexorable in business, and in general society he always assumed, partly out of shyness and partly from policy, a defensive armour that was most difficult to penetrate. But at bottom there was not a little geniality in his nature, and among intimates he was often cheerful and sometimes garrulous ; the habit grew on him with years, and in most serious times, and in the midst of intensely serious discussions, he would frequently develop a curious irrelevancy and small-talkativeness. At no time did he like to be alone ; if he did not talk himself —and sometimes he indulged a mood of strict taciturnity—he liked to have someone to talk to him. And, being an autocrat, he always preferred that the somebody should be one who would not take offence if suddenly snubbed for doing what he was there to do. There are kings who love the society of great lords as near as may be to their own station, and there are kings who prefer for their intimates and confidants men of inferior standing. Lord Kitchener was a potentate of the latter kind, and for the most part the true man was only seen by people who were in effect little more than members of his suite. The chief exceptions were a few favoured generals, and the few men, and the fewer women, who had the privilege of being his friends in general society. With such he could be utterly charming; and he had also a way of getting into the affections of their children : one little girl, now a mother herself, used always to say her prayers at his knee when he was a visitor at her father's house ; and the Grenfell boys were on small-brotherly terms with the grim Field-Marshal. Kitchener, in short, had a very human heart, and a

quite human longing for affection. His celibacy was partly a matter of accident and partly of principle: he disliked extremely the idea of a married soldier; he seems to have shared Athos' view that a dying warrior should cry with his last breath "*Vive le roi*," and not murmur, "Adieu, my dear wife." Thus in South Africa he would allow none of the married officers to be joined by their wives, and once in a general company, on hearing of the marriage of one of his men, he burst into an angry tirade. With such a view of the vocation of soldiering, and with the mere fact of so much of his life being passed in remote places, it is small wonder that his own marrying age went by. But, though in his later years he may not have regretted the lack of a wife, he certainly felt the want of children, and realised somewhat pathetically his own loneliness.

But this gentler side was known to very few indeed, and only guessed by a few more. To the majority of those who met Kitchener, even frequently and in some intimacy, he appeared until the very last years of his life a man of one idea and no emotions. The truth was rather that his emotions were mostly in complete subjection to his will, while the idea exercised a despotic domination over his whole being. There was really something of the old anchorite in this very modern and secular person, and it is not altogether irrelevant to recall that in his early days he was vividly interested in small minutiæ of Church ritual.

"I have heard him indulge in coarse ungentlemanly emphatics,
When the Protestant Church has been divided on the subject of the proper width of a chasuble's hem;
I have even known him to sneer at albs, and as for dalmatics,
Words cannot convey an idea of the contempt he always expressed for them."

The young Kitchener was far from sharing the sentiments of Gilbert's latitudinarian hero. He would

have discussed albs with fervour, and dalmatics with reverence, and would have seen nothing more ridiculous in caring about the size of a chasuble than about the strength of a platoon. He would have argued, or rather felt, that discipline, dogma—in other words, shape, consistency, and fighting unity—were as necessary in affairs of the Spirit as in secular life. In other days and other circumstances he might well have been either a peaceful abbot or the head of an order of religious knights ; there was deep in his nature that passion for self-immolation which made the most businesslike people monks, as well as that passion for meticulous order and method which made monks the most businesslike people of their time. His other passions, probably, were not strong ; strong or weak, they were wholly under control. He hated incontinence in any form. The effusive youth who called him " Kitchener," and was met with the cool reply " Perhaps you'd rather use my Christian name," was not more discouraged than the swearer of oaths or the teller of profane or unseemly anecdotes. To Kitchener might be applied the eulogy of Clarendon on Charles I : " He was so severe an exactor of gravity and reverence in all mention of religion, that he could never endure any light or profane word, with what sharpness of wit soever it was covered ; and . . . no man durst bring before him any thing that was profane or unclean." Sir George Arthur has remarked on the mingled astonishment and irritation with which he listened to a questionable performance at Cairo, given on an occasion when official reasons obliged him to be present ; and there was something hugely disconcerting in the manner in which he received a jest of doubtful taste made in general society. His attitude was too well known for such a thing to be a possibility among his own intimates.

It has been said that the man who is not afraid to

die is lord and master of all other men. Equally true is it to say that the man who is not afraid to live according to his own plan will always dominate those who yield to fashion in opinion, to social modes, or to the weaknesses of their own natures. Kitchener's peculiar power was due to his immense self-discipline. He could hardly be called, in the real sense, a military genius ; Roberts was his superior as an intellectual soldier, and among his own subordinates there were men more richly endowed even in those qualities he really possessed in large measure—the qualities of the organiser which were so signally shown in the long preparations for the triumph, so swift and sure in its final realisation, of Omdurman. But other soldiers were sometimes off duty. Kitchener was never off duty. The moment one task was done he was preparing himself for another ; he was that kind of moral athlete who never permits himself a day's departure from strict training. Practically this rigidity has its dangers ; there is such a thing in life, as in sport, as getting stale from over-fitness ; and when the final test of Kitchener's life came it might perhaps have been well for him and for others if he had wasted (as he would have thought it) a little more time during his prime. For, with all his painfully acquired lore, he lacked the full knowledge of men, and in whole departments of things he could only oppose an enormous innocence to people grown old in wile. But in the meantime he gained indefinitely in influence through his almost inhuman absorption in soldiering, his complete indifference to money, society, and everything men prize as soon as their purely material desires have reached saturation point. He received full credit for the qualities which were really his. He was conceded some qualities which, in fact, he did not possess. He was trusted as the final court of appeal on all questions relating to the East, even those affecting parts of the East with

which he was really not familiar, for it is our habit to think that a man who has lived in Suez must in some mysterious way know much about Bombay. He was regarded above all as " straight," and justly so, for, though habituation to Eastern conditions had given him in minor matters some touch of Oriental guile, he was, in all great things, the soul of truth, and in everything the essence of probity. But there were occasions on which his great prestige was something of a disadvantage. It was assumed that on all military and Eastern questions Kitchener must be right and all other men wrong, and that he must be especially right whenever his opinion happened to clash with that of a politician. A good many things might have gone better had not the infallibility of Lord Kitchener become a journalistic dogma, to be disputed only at the cost of excommunication. In the same way the magic of his personality was used to give weight to a certain set of political ideas. It was so used without collusion or privity or consent on his part ; all his life he had an almost superstitious terror of politics, and no hint of sympathy with one party or reprobation of another ever crossed his lips. But it is not beyond the ingenuity of politicians to convey an impression without making a statement, and they so contrived matters that a good many people, while honouring him as a soldier and recognising him as a high-minded public servant, watched him with a certain strained attention. It needed the Great War to reveal to the working classes the true nature of the man and the absolute singleness of his aims. Then they were convinced, and he had no heartier admirers than the working men, who honoured his name, and trusted his word, above all other war-lords'.

But though Kitchener was in every sense the farthest removed from a politician, he had many of the qualities of a statesman, and his work at every

period of his career (and at no period more than during the Great War) cannot be properly measured solely by his military achievements. We have seen his statesmanship at work at Fashoda, but it had its influence at every stage of his career. If the Kitchener legend, whatever measure of falsity mingled with its truth, was of immense value in sustaining the spirit of England in the great ordeal, it was not less useful in vitalising the Alliance. Frenchmen felt that they had in Kitchener someone who understood the real nature of the vast transaction before them; someone who would not yield to the traditional English conception of Continental war as colony-seizing and island-collecting, but who, on the other hand, knew in his very bones that the thing must be fought out on the main battlefield, and that no showy successes elsewhere would avail against defeat in that sombre theatre. The visit to Paris, in the gloomy days before the Marne, was that of a soldier who understood war on the great scale, and was understood at once by men grown grey in the study of war of that kind. Kitchener's work at the War Office can never be measured by shells and machine-guns; the greatest part of it was that of a military foreign minister, able to speak a language unknown to a civilian Secretary for Foreign Affairs.

It is this latent quality of statesmanship which makes one wonder whether Lord Kitchener would not have done even greater things for the Empire had it been his lot to spend more time at its heart and less in the outer marches. But his fate was decided partly by his circumstances and partly by his peculiar constitution. He could only expect promotion by taking jobs that nobody else wanted, and he had a horror of cold weather which would have made continuous residence in a northern latitude insupportable to him. Once he got the label of the soldier of the outer Empire it stuck to him, and thus it happened

that the Englishman with the broadest military outlook of his time never faced, until he was called to the greatest of all tasks, a military problem of the largest kind. His own view of himself is well known. He looked forward, just before his death, to tasks rather of a statesmanlike than a military kind; and it is permissible to distrust that optimism which professed, when the news of the *Hampshire's* loss came, the comfortable belief that he had done his country all the service of which he was capable. For there was much in the man which would assuredly not have been useless in the final liquidation of accounts; and, even had no specific employment been found for his talents, the mere force of his living example would have been valuable. In the presence of one who had shown such large fidelity, such noble disdain of the objects of selfish desire, such self-forgetting devotion to a trust, it would have been more difficult for faction and self-seeking to display themselves unashamed. He is too recently dead for his spirit to work on this generation as it will, doubtless, on men still unborn. But alive he might have reminded the masses that there can be true greatness in great place, and people in great place that true greatness is a matter of a man's soul and not of his station.

CHAPTER VIII

THE DUKE OF DEVONSHIRE

THERE are certain things that come to one only in maturity. One is a taste for Jane Austen. Another is a correct sense of the meaning and importance of such men as Spencer Compton Cavendish, Knight of the Garter, eighth Duke of Devonshire, Marquis of Hartington, Earl of Devonshire, Earl of Burlington, Baron Cavendish of Hardwicke, and Baron Cavendish of Keighley.

To a young man in the Nineties the mere fact of the Duke's importance was obvious enough. Had he not been in politics time out of mind, ever since he was twenty-four? Was not his breach with Mr. Gladstone one of the cardinal facts of modern history? Was he not among the first half-dozen men accorded the distinction of "first person" reports? Was he not cartooned and quoted after the manner of the very greatest? But why? The young fellow of the Nineties saw simply a large dull man, with a large dull way of talking, a man incapable of saying a witty thing, or doing a picturesque thing; and in his haste this young fellow declared that all men were snobs, that the sole secret of the Duke's influence was his wealth and position, that if he had been born the son of a clerk he would never have risen to be more than a clerk, but, being the son of a great noble, people hastened to find in him qualities which were simply not there.

And in some ways, no doubt, the young fellow was right. In any station Spencer Compton Cavendish

would have been something, something real and substantial, something of true human worth, of strong sense, shrewd vision, and rare fidelity. But it is highly probable that, had he been born poor, he would never have been heard of beyond the limits of his parish. For he had few of the qualities, and none of the defects, that make a man rise. No human being was ever more destitute of vanity, which is one great motive of pushfulness. Though his sense of duty made him accept responsibility, he hated it ; though he felt compelled to do much work, he detested exertion ; utterance in any kind was painful to him ; he was quite wanting in surface brilliance and in the quality people call magnetism. Such men do not readily " get on." They find their groove, and stay in it. They are too much trusted in the positions they actually fill for anybody to be anxious to promote them, while their own laziness, pride, dislike of cultivating superiors, and general capacity of " consuming their own smoke " all conspire to keep them where they are. In most business places one will find men almost indispensable in their special jobs, who are never thought of in connection with a superior job, partly because it would be troublesome to replace them, partly because they are bad courtiers, but chiefly from the sheer difficulty of imagining them elsewhere.

The Duke of Devonshire was a man of this sort. He did not make himself, and he was not exactly made by circumstances ; he was there, and the circumstances were so, and a process of adaptation, chiefly unconscious, followed. He might almost be described, politically, as a natural growth—a kind of tree which went through its destined changes of development and decay in accordance with a certain principle, but in obedience to no visible motive. He got himself planted in a certain soil without much consideration on his own part ; he took such firm root that he could not

unplant himself, though he constantly wished to do so ; and thus it arrived that for over fifty years he was the one permanent feature in a changing landscape. The creatures of the hour, the beasts of the political field, gathered under him for shade, support, or convenience, and he gave them what he had to give, almost with the impartiality of a thing inanimate. But, just as the beech-tree is often in close association with a herd of swine, but does not follow the swine when they roam away to an oak, so the Duke remained rooted in the midst of a constantly changing company ; he had all sorts of associates, but he did not follow them when they sought fresh woods and pastures new ; to the end he remained what he had been from the beginning—the pure Whig. I remember a poor little Liberal Unionist of the Nineties who complained that he had been sadly misrepresented. " It is not I," he used to say—he was about five feet high, and had a querulous little squeak—" it is not I who have deserted my party ; it is my party that has deserted me." The Duke of Devonshire could at any time have said the same thing without evoking a challenge or even a smile. He did not leave Mr. Gladstone ; he merely stayed where he was. He did not leave Mr. Balfour twenty years later ; Mr. Balfour took up a new position, and the Duke remained in his. Of all the Liberal Unionists he alone did not suffer " some sea change " as the result of immersion in the Tory flood. Even Mr. Chamberlain was not immune ; he did not become a Conservative, but he did become a new kind of Radical. The Duke shed no particle of his old-fashioned Whiggism, with its distrust of the Crown, the Church, and the people, and its intense faith in itself. In 1902 he was still conscious of a dividing line between himself and his Conservative colleagues—a line " imperceptible to the practised eye " of Lord Rosebery. The line was assuredly there, real if not obtruded. Lord Salisbury

was still too much of a Carolean theologically and too much of a modernist politically to suit a mind which envisaged Sir Robert Walpole as the ideal occupant of 10, Downing Street, and Dr. Thomas Tusher as the proper tenant of Lambeth.

If this immobility had been the result of mere stupidity the young man of the Nineties would have been justified in his scepticism. But in fact the Duke was by no means stupid. Or, rather, the fact can best be put in positive form. While the least clever of men, he had a quite uncommon gift of true wisdom. He had all the outward marks of dullness. No man was more completely without colour or atmosphere. A rather abnormal carelessness in dress contributed to his conventionality rather than relieved it. He was old-fashioned without a touch of the picturesqueness of the antique, and untidy without the piquancy of Bohemianism. Some of his contemporaries had the interest of a well-ordered " period " room ; the Duke gave rather the impression of a furniture broker's shop full of miscellaneous Victorian mahogany. His beard—though it had a certain subtle character of its own, as just a shade different from the growth of any plebeian, lay or clerical—completed the notion of carelessness without grace and individuality without distinction. His attitudes were angular ; when he did not sprawl on a bench or in an arm-chair he leaned up against a pillar or a mantelpiece, and somehow he seemed to take the colour out of the most glowing examples of stuff and stone. His expression was habitually dreary, and if by chance he said he was glad to see you—and very often he did not—you would have had some little difficulty in believing it had you not reflected that " no Cavendish tells a lie," and that he was a most typical Cavendish in that regard. He suffered from a permanent difficulty of self-expression ; the simplest speech caused him torment, and (though he could be the kindest

and most considerate of hosts) social chit-chat was scarcely less painful. He was most extraordinarily lazy. He dozed when he could, and yawned when he could not. His yawn was perfectly impartial—he yawned at friends, foes, and himself. Once in the middle of his own Army Estimates the fit came upon him, and he signified in the usual manner his weariness of the whole performance. This yawn was a thing of wonder, so hearty and natural that no question of manners arose. It suggested no affront, even to the most prolix speaker ; it was rather a proclamation of privilege, like the wearing of a hat in the House of Commons. It seemed to say, " I am a Duke, and (possibly more to the point) a great gentleman, so that nobody can accuse me of not knowing how to ' behave.' But after all what is the use of owning Chatsworth, Devonshire House, all those Eastbourne ground-rents, and I really cannot trouble to think what else, if I cannot be natural ? Here I am—heaven alone knows really why—condemned to this intolerable boredom. I go through it, because I feel somehow that I ought. But I claim in return the freedom of not pretending that I find it amusing. Please don't be offended ; I should be sorry if you were. But if you insist on taking offence I shall sleep none the less soundly to-night, or—who knows ? —ten minutes hence if the fit takes me."

It is related of the Duke that he once went to another seat in the House of Lords specially to listen to a speech, and fell asleep there before five minutes had elapsed. He once gave a reply to a noble lord. The noble lord was not satisfied, and made a long speech in order to say so. The Duke fell asleep, but woke automatically (as people do at the end of a sermon) when the voice ceased. Then he began to read his answer a second time, but, suddenly remembering what had already happened, abruptly sat down again without saying another word. And

the House (which knew its Duke) was perfectly satisfied.

How the Duke in such circumstances managed to get the right end of any controversial stick must ultimately remain a mystery. But that he did so is a plain fact. For, if a slow thinker, he was a generally clear one, and, if a painful speaker, he made speeches which never lacked matter. His was one of those minds on which sophistry has no effect. He was not incapable of admiring eloquence and ingenuity. His attitude towards Mr. Gladstone was a singular mixture of reverence and something not unlike disdain. So much of Mr. Gladstone was admirable, and yet so much of him simply "would not do for the Duke." One often sees a shrewd old Hodge listening to the patter of a cheap-jack at a fair. He enjoys the jokes, and has a kind of glee in the dexterity, but he is simply not made to believe in an eighteen-carat gold English lever, jewelled in thirty-seven holes, for twenty-three and six. The Duke never troubled to consider every point; he was content to say that it could not be done at the price, and leave the matter there. And if he would not buy, still less would he consider any proposal to go into the cheap-jack business himself; if anybody wanted the Duke as a colleague it was no use to propose a line in razors made only to sell. The character, of course, has its defects. The Duke was mainly negative in his wisdom. His belief in gold might make him unjust to platinum, but he was infallible in detecting pinchbeck. On things of pure spirit it was useless to consult him, but on any question which could be weighed in the balance of common-sense his judgment sought its fellow.

Hence it became a habit of a large number of people, during a long range of time, to wait till the Duke had declared himself before they made up their own minds. It sometimes took the Duke a long time to

declare himself. Where, as in the case of Home Rule, the matter was comparatively simple, no man could be more sharply decisive. It was impossible for him to undergo any process of self-hypnosis such as that of which Mr. Gladstone was occasionally capable; he could not understand the distinction between "war" and "military operations" or between being "surrounded" and being "hemmed in." In 1885 he had declared himself unalterably against Home Rule, and he saw no reason to say another thing in 1886. But in the matter of Tariff Reform the issue and the man were both more complicated, and plain "Yes" or "No" harder. The Duke was quite sure about Ireland; he was less sure about maintaining Free Trade by reverting at least partially to Protection. He knew Mr. Gladstone to the bottom; no human being had succeeded in knowing Mr. Balfour. He could only confess himself at first "completely puzzled and distracted by all the arguments *pro* and *con* Free Trade and Protection." But, he finally decided, "whichever of them is right, I cannot think that something which is neither, but a little of both, can be right." In both cases his judgment was an element of great importance, but, while it was of decisive effect in regard to Home Rule, it exerted less influence on the latter controversy. The public judged, as usual, rightly. In the one case Lord Hartington, as a plain and very honest Englishman in close contact with realities, might be trusted to form at least an interim judgment on behalf of plain and honest Englishmen in general. But in the other case the moral factor counted for less, and the intellectual factor for more, and the prolonged puzzlement of the Duke detracted from his influence when he finally decided (with infinite agony) on his course.

The main source of the Duke's influence was, indeed, the general conviction that, with a masculine but ordinary understanding, he combined perfect

disinterestedness and straightforwardness. This faith was not based wholly on the fact that he was a great noble ; the middle class might, indeed, have been a little scandalised by the side of him illustrated in the affair of the napkin-ring. The Duke had seen in the paper that somebody had given a certain bride a set of napkin-rings. He worried about the meaning of this until he came across a knowledgeable man, who, he thought, could explain what napkin-rings were. The explanation was given that in a certain class of society people did not use clean napkins for every meal, and that therefore each member of the family kept a distinctive ring. The Duke remained silent for ten minutes. Then he suddenly exclaimed : "Good God!" It was certainly not this kind of aloofness that gave the Duke his power. Nor was it so much to the point that he was placed, by his rank and wealth, far above all vulgar ambitions. Many men as rich and as highly placed have been the objects of sleepless suspicion. Apart from money, there are plenty of temptations open to rank, and wealth is no guarantee of honesty. The Duke enjoyed public confidence in an extraordinary degree because it was so very obvious, not only that he was getting nothing, but that it was impossible for him to get anything out of politics. His yawn, in fact, was his great talisman. Everybody knew that if he had consulted his own tastes he would hardly have stirred beyond his park palings. Everybody knew that he carried out what he believed to be his political duties just as he carried out what he believed to be his social duties, not because he got any pleasure or profit from them, but because the obligations were there and had to be met. It is said that he once invited the Prince of Wales to lunch, and then forgot all about it ; the Prince presumably arrived to find Devonshire House fragrant with the ducal equivalent of Irish stew ; while His Grace himself had to be

summoned by telephone from his club by a terrified major-domo. It was part of the Duke's strength that such a story could be related of him. The true point was not that he was a great nobleman, and therefore disinterested ; it was that he was from every point of view uninterested. It was not simply that he had no financial or social axe to grind ; there was no fancy cutlery of the spiritual or intellectual kind which he desired to sharpen. Men do not always ruin their country for a fee ; they more often do so for a fad. The Duke was free from all fads, except Whiggism. He had a certain honourable interest in education. He nourished, in his dry and secretive way, a distinct love of the arts in general and of certain departments in literature. But on all public questions he was able to bring his faculties, such as they were—and it was particularly easy to rate them too lowly—without subjective disturbance ; it may almost be said that he thought *in vacuo*.

Moreover, he was in essence a very ordinary Englishman. With an effort he might think of himself as a Briton, or as a citizen of the British Empire. But his inner mind knew nothing of Acts of Union ; he was English and nothing but English. And being very English, it followed that he cared a great deal about truth and very little about logic, and that he was much more inclined to follow the beaten track than to initiate. People felt that he was a safe man, who would not go far, but therefore could not go far wrong. He once described himself, rather pathetically, as " the brake on the wheel." It is a humble, but on occasion a useful, function, and the sheer unimaginativeness of the man was time and time again an asset to his country. But such a character arouses no great enthusiasm, and if the Duke was trusted without limit, he was neither a popular idol nor the hero of a small circle. He went his way in a certain detachment, never alone but

always a little lonely. Even in his own houses there was a tendency to regard him as something to gather round instead of someone to talk to. He might almost be said to fulfil the function of the dining-table rather than of the host.

The position had its compensations. The Duke was the chartered libertine of his time. He could go poaching where others could not look over the hedge. Lord Rosebery's Derby victories caused scandal among the virtuous of his party. Nobody troubled about the Duke's bets or race-horses. He played bridge for high points, but nobody thought of him as a gambler. He used emphatic adjectives, without the reproach attaching to the swearer of profane oaths. It may be an exaggeration to say that whatever the Duke did was right. But nobody troubled about his doing wrong ; no doubt because people felt that it would not be very much wrong, after all. And in this their judgment was sufficiently sound. The man was in no sense a saint or a hero. He never said or did a thing to make a single man's pulse beat quicker. He was incapable of the highest in any kind. But his character, however prosaic, was based on a foundation of granitic firmness. If not a great man, he was at least a true and honest one.

CHAPTER IX

ARCHBISHOP TEMPLE

IT is related of Frederick Temple, when he was Bishop of London, that he offered two shillings to a cabman who had brought him from somewhere near Piccadilly to Fulham Palace. The cabman looked at the Bishop more in sorrow than in anger. "Would St. Porl," he asked, "if he were alive now, treat a poor man like that?" "No," said Temple, "if St. Paul were alive he would be at Lambeth, and the fare there is only a shilling."

The wit and the philosophy were equally characteristic of the gnarled old man who, at a time of life when most people are fit only for the chimney corner, was still regarded as the strongest prelate on the Bench. Wit, the wit of the peasant rather than of the courtier—and there is no more authentic variety—Dr. Temple had in full measure; there was something reminiscent of Swift in the homely shrewdness of his judgments, and in the terse vigour with which he expressed them. The peasant predominated also in his philosophy; the Rugby boy who delivered the famous opinion that he was "a beast, but a just beast," was probably not conscious how very right the description was. Temple had eminently the peasant's sense of what was due from as well as to him. He was spiritual kinsman to that Scottish gardener in Mr. Chesterton's tale who, being bequeathed "all the gold of the Ogilvies," took it all, to the very stopping in the testator's teeth, but left everything else. That manner which many found

repellent was not the manner of a really harsh man ; Temple could feel deeply, and the sobs that convulsed him when he heard of Archbishop Benson's sudden death were the authentic heralds of a warm heart. But he had Dr. Johnson's impatience of " foppish complaints," of unmeaning compliments, of the little graces that matter so much with the ordinary run of men and women. Of work well and truly done he was sufficiently appreciative, but only sufficiently ; after all, good work was the thing to expect, and why make a fuss about it ? When people who had no right expressed appreciation of himself he snapped savagely. A courtly Rector once expressed the fear that his lordship must be very tired after such long and self-sacrificing exertions. " Not more tired than a man ought to be," barked Temple. A careful Vicar remonstrated with him for standing so long bare-headed under a blazing sun. " My skull is thicker than yours," was the only reply. Above all, he hated anything suggesting professional " gush." At the laying of the foundation-stone of a new church a clergyman with tendencies that way remarked on the pleasure it must be to him to take part in ceremonies so eloquent of the extending scope of the Church in his diocese. " Not at all," retorted Temple, " at these affairs I get nothing but cold lamb and ' The Church's One Foundation,' and I'm tired of both." Though a connoisseur in vintages, he gave up the use of wine simply in order to make easier his task as a temperance-worker ; but this self-immolation (and he would have snarled at anybody who praised it as such) made him only the more acid at the expense of men who seemed to him to talk exaggerated nonsense about teetotalism as the foundation of all the virtues.

The truth was that Temple, though of good blood, was himself half a peasant, and was full of that impatience with any kind of pretence which comes of

close contact with the soil. He had all the peasant's pride, together with all the peasant's contempt for what they call in the country " mucky pride." Himself master of a pure and masculine style, he detested all floridity of speech. To the end of his life his manners were a little rustic, and he retained that sense of economy (having no necessary relation to meanness) which is inborn in most country people above the station of the labourer and below that of the landlord ; when Primate of All England he munched his bun and sipped his milk at a tea-shop with the more satisfaction for the consciousness that they cost only twopence ; the " tip " he would omit. Curiously enough, this most English of men was born on soil always Hellenic, and now officially Greek. Thirteenth of the fifteen children of an infantry officer who had been appointed Resident of Santa Maura, one of the Ionian Isles, Temple grew up to speak modern Greek and Italian as fluently as his mother tongue. His father, able and upright, but of explosive temper, came originally from the North Country, and belonged to a branch of that Temple family which, first made illustrious by the husband of Dorothy Osborne and the patron of Swift, has given so many statesmen to England. The mother of the future Archbishop was a Cornish woman by blood and a Puritan by habit and tradition, frugal, pious, authoritative, and immensely capable. She taught Frederick till he was twelve ; and, though she knew no Latin, and had no notion of the low cunning of Euclid, she managed to give him a very fair grounding in these and other subjects. The only drawback of this queer kind of instruction was that the boy was left to his own devices in the matter of quantities, and years afterwards the masters at Blundell's were horrified by his barbaric pronunciation of the polished tongue of Virgil. After his retirement from the Ionian Islands, the paternal Temple bought a small farm in

Devonshire, but he could not make it pay, and was forced to take a small appointment in West Africa, where he died. His widow did her best with the farm and a small pension, and young Temple learned how to " muck out " pigsties, to handle stock, and, above all, to plough ; years after he could boast that he could draw as straight a furrow as any man in Cornwall, and when as an undergraduate he applied for admission to a Chartist meeting he was allowed to pass the barrier on the testimony of his hands ; they were those of an indubitable manual worker.

Mere hard work and hard living, however, fail to embitter a lad of healthy mind and body who is conscious of a creditable past and ambitious of a better future. Temple could bear with stoicism the regimen of dry bread which the poverty of the family compelled. The only severe wound was to his pride. " I think the thing that pinched me most," said Temple long afterwards, " was to wear patched clothes and patched shoes." But even this does not seem to have weighed much ; his character was sturdy and his spirits were high ; and the picture we have of him at Blundell's is by no means that of the self-conscious poor scholar. Not only was he a hearty player and fighter, but (on the authority of the headmaster) " the most impudent boy that ever lived " ; and the abounding health of his mind is proved by his detestation of *Swiss Family Robinson*—" a hateful book," he calls it, " the liars were so lucky." At Balliol, where he went with a scholarship, life was hard ; he had no fire in his room even in the depth of winter, and was known to read under the light of the hall lamp because he had no oil for his own. The Tractarian movement was then at its climax ; Newman was preaching the last of his sermons at St. Mary's before his conversion to the ancient Church. But Temple seems to have kept his head surprisingly amid all this ferment ; he had in truth, throughout

life, something of that calm outlook on religion which struck young Esmond in Master Thomas Tusher. He believed in Christianity much as a sound business man believes in double entry, but with conviction there was no emotion. No man dreamed fewer dreams, partly, no doubt, because few men did harder work ; work kills dreaming, for good as well as for ill. Outwardly there was little to distinguish Temple from those great pagans of the eighteenth century who nearly made the Church in England what the Church in Ireland actually became. But he had somewhere hidden under the harsh husk of rationalism a little of that wistfulness which one notes in so many of the nineteenth-century clergy ; the thing is best described by referring to Kingsley's anxiety to be with the earliest authorities in theology and the latest authorities in science. In his earlier life, naturally enough, the tendency to modernism was most marked. Temple's orthodoxy was called into question over his contribution to *Essays and Reviews*, but there seems no reason to suppose that he departed far from the straight path, and those who have survived to hear most of the great Christian dogmas attacked in conspicuous Church pulpits find inexplicable on purely doctrinal grounds the storm which broke when Mr. Gladstone offered Temple the See of Exeter.

In a wider sense, perhaps, there was a more rational basis for the outcry. For Temple, with all his good and great qualities, was too little of the mystic to appeal to those who regarded the Church as something above and beyond a useful (or even indispensable) organisation. His sense of professional duty was high, but his mind was eminently that of a practical man of affairs, and he would probably have acted more wisely, in other interests as well as his own, if he had remained in the scholastic work to which the earlier part of his life was devoted. When he went to Exeter Temple had behind him a great record

as an educational bureaucrat, and a still greater record as head-master of Rugby. But he had never served as a parish priest ; his disposition was aloof, his temper autocratic, his manner rugged, his voice harsh and rasping ; he had little imagination, and the quality of his mind fitted him more for politics, for high finance, for law, or even for soldiering than for the duties of a Christian high priest. A great spiritual leader in the full sense Temple could never have been. But he " made good " as a Bishop as he had " made good " as a head-master, and in much the same way. His diocese became a well-managed school, and his clergy were put in their places much like the boys of Rugby ; some, perhaps, regarded him as a " beast," none could call him other than a " just beast " and an energetic one. With the laity he had a certain popularity, partly because he was severe on any sacerdotal eccentricities that annoyed them, partly because with ordinary people he was more prone to unbend than with his professional brethren. He was at his very easiest in dealing with boys.

The translation to London, after fifteen years in the West, came in the natural course of events, and the Nineties found Temple well established at Fulham. He was now an old man, but his power of work was as little diminished as the angularity of his character. In a single year he would answer about ten thousand letters, perhaps a third of them in his own hand ; the meetings he attended averaged more than one a day ; he held seventy or eighty confirmations and ordained a hundred and fifty priests annually, and yet found time for services and addresses for nearly every day of the year. The masculine strength of his mind, the beautiful simplicity of his life, won admiration, but Archbishop Benson had often to deplore the want of that " little more " which would have been so much in his old friend and ex-principal. " He will not say or do," he laments, at the time

of the dockers' strike, " one thing with the idea that men should think well of him." " It is very painful," he says again, in 1891, " very painful, to see the Lords so unappreciative of the Bishop of London—the strongest man nearly in the House, the clearest, the highest-toned, the most deeply sympathetic, the clearest in principle—yet because his voice is a little harsh and his accent a little provincial (though of what province it is hard to say), and his figure square and his hair a little rough, and because all this sets off the idea of his independence, he is not listened to at all by the cold, kindly, worldly-wise, gallant, land-owning powers." The Archbishop was a little cross because during the dockers' strike Cardinal Manning managed to figure much more largely than Temple in the public eye. But this was something like blaming Darwin because he was not Sir Henry Irving. Temple was Temple, and Manning was Manning; and, if Manning was wise to be always Manning, Temple was certainly wise to be always Temple. A histrionic or diplomatic Temple is something from which the very imagination recoils. And, after all, the gentle Archbishop's repinings were hardly justified. The kind of worth which Temple represented rarely wins enthusiasm, but it seldom fails to gain respect. To suggest that Temple made any real impression on the great pagan capital would be absurd; like everybody else who has been called for generations to the See of London he was mocked by the gigantic hopelessness of his task. Before London can be made Christian it must be made human, and, though Londoners remain very human, London had long ceased to be so. " London," says an admirer, " expected in Temple a man of grit and steel, and so it found him." London, of course, expected nothing, and was in no way disappointed; it was little more concerned with his coming than with the appointment of a new magistrate at Bow Street, and little more

concerned with his departure than with the retirement of a Lord Mayor. To London as London—London, just as ignorant of the men who make its laws as of the men who tear up its pavements—Temple was exactly nothing. To a great many people in London he was a name, and to a great many more a character. To only a tiny fraction of London was he anything else. But here, as at Exeter, he " made good " in the narrower sense. He organised and energised, wisely stirred up some dogs which had slept in his predecessor's time, still more wisely administered soothing syrup to other dogs too emphatically awake, put down his foot in some small matters, kept it discreetly poised in some big ones, and imparted to all who worked under him something of his own single-mindedness and passion for work.

He was seventy-six when he removed to Lambeth, and could save a shilling on his cab fare. " I have still five years' work in me," he said to a friend after he had accepted Lord Salisbury's offer of the Primacy, and the forecast was almost exact ; he died before he had completed his sixth year as Archbishop. The work was hardly new to him ; for years he had been Archbishop Benson's chief adviser, and the change was more one of form than of substance. The duties of the highest ecclesiastical office were carried through in the same spirit as those which had gone before ; in spite of failing powers the indomitable old man did all that presented itself as his proper work, and, like the patron of Gil Blas, refused to recognise that the same Time which had now reduced him to a rebellious invalidism had had some effect on his sturdy intelligence. He outlived both the century and the great Queen ; it actually fell to him, born under George IV, to crown Edward VII, and, like Chatham, he was addressing the House of Lords when he sank under the blow which within a few days ended his life.

On the broad current of the national life at the beginning of a bustling new reign, the news of his death caused but a momentary ripple. But far outside the limits of his own Church and circle there were not wanting men who felt that a figure had been removed that left none to vie with it in its rugged and lonely majesty. It was not a time of popularity for the typical Victorian virtues. It stood to the age that had passed somewhat as the Regency did to the last phase of the reign of Louis XIV. But those who read at the close of 1902 the record of the full and fine life that had begun eighty-one years earlier could only admit that the age must have been great in which Temple after all never reached quite the first rank.

CHAPTER X

LORD RANDOLPH CHURCHILL

IN 1880 Lord Randolph Churchill was regarded as a trifler; in 1885 he was definitely numbered among the three or four men who counted in British politics; in 1890 he was, politically speaking, a ghost; and in 1895 he died. His whole political career—or at least that part of it which could distinguish him from the ordinary representative of a family borough—scarcely extended to fifteen years; the significant part of it was compressed within five. Yet those five years sufficed to give him an ascendancy in the Tory Party far more marked than that which Disraeli had established after decades of laborious application. The moment before his fall it seemed certain that he, and no other, would shape Tory policy; that he would, sooner or later, oust the Cecils; that he would get rid of the Birmingham influence; and that, within some quite measurable period, he would, with undisputed authority, reign over a Cabinet of young Tories committed to the task of making actual part at least of the Young England dream of the great Jew who, with his usual generous appreciation of youthful talent, had marked Lord Randolph early as one who must, with any reasonable prudence and industry, play a great part in affairs.

The fall came, and within a few weeks Lord Randolph was in the position of the unfortunate deer "much marked of the melancholy Jacques." He was bankrupt, and shunned by every "fat and greasy

LORD RANDOLPH CHURCHILL.

citizen " on the look out for rich pasturage. The men who had trembled before him had begun to wonder why they could have been so foolishly submissive. Lord Salisbury congratulated himself on having got rid of a troublesome " carbuncle," and inwardly resolved not to run a second risk. Mr. Balfour, who could not forget the comradeship of the Fourth Party days, was like a good-natured man who sees an old schoolfellow carrying a sandwich-board in the Strand ; unable to give any real help, he was only too glad to bestow some of the small change of courtesy, especially when no one in particular was looking. The ordinary crowd of place-holders and place-seekers passed by on the other side. In the inner councils of the party there reigned for a moment a queer kind of glee. It was like the breakfast after a very disturbed night in a country house. The memory of the fire, or the burglars, or the Zeppelins, or the ghost which made Lady Polly scream so dreadfully (and which turned out to be only the under-footman somnambulating in his pyjamas) gives a peculiar zest to the devilled kidneys and the grilled sole, and the best appetites belong to those who were most alarmed. Now, Lord Randolph Churchill was, to the ordinary Conservative, not one but all of these terrors. He was a fire which had actually burned many dry sticks, and threatened many more. He had broken into the Cabinet with a most ingeniously contrived set of house-breaking implements. He was much in the air, and nobody knew when he was going to drop things of explosive quality. And he was, in a certain political sense, a sham ghost and a real under-footman. That " Tory Democracy," as old as Bolingbroke and perhaps older, was never much more than a wraith, and nobody really knew how much substance there was behind the cunning magnesium glares with which Lord Randolph sought to hypnotise the masses. But everybody did know that,

with all his vigour and ability and success, there was something, so to speak, unestablished about him. He was the master of his masters, as a servant may become in certain circumstances rare in real life but common in fiction ; and he used his power while it remained with him without stint or scruple. But he never quite consolidated that power ; he remained always like the schemer in the novel, apparently omnipotent but really always fearful of a reverse, and compelled to go on more and more boldly because to stay still is the most dangerous thing of all. The first false step was irretrievable, because there was, after all, nothing to retrieve. Lord Randolph was not a political investor. He was a margin gambler, constantly putting his winnings to a new hazard. The game is an exciting one, and while he continues to win much is heard in praise of the punter's genius. But one break will ruin him.

In *Vivian Grey* Disraeli had prophetically drawn the main lines of the character and method of his admirer and imitator. Vivian, like Lord Randolph, went in for politics for the excitement of the thing, and, also like Lord Randolph, proceeded on the assumption that every man who seems dull is a dolt. We all know how Vivian fooled and bent to his purpose the stupid Marquess of Carabas. But when the house of cards went to pieces it was the clever Vivian who looked chiefly the fool. The Marquess could go back to his park, his coverts, his stables, and his cellar ; the other hardly knew where to hide. Lord Randolph's case was not dissimilar. He used and abused men in many ways more important than himself, but up to a point he showed great dexterity ; his victims were generally those whom other great people were not unwilling to wound, though delicate of striking. At last he tried his strength against equals, or perhaps superiors ; he failed, and all dullness extant revelled in its revenge. It is often stated

that his one mistake was that he " forgot Goschen." It would be truer to say that he forgot the prudence which had so far underlain his apparent recklessness. We can hardly believe that a man of Lord Randolph's intelligence seriously thought there would be any difficulty in providing a stop-gap Chancellor of the Exchequer. Goschen did as well as another, but practically anybody would do. A turn of history seldom depends on the Goschens, whether in units, or tens, or hundreds. The decided and important turn that came late in 1886 was due to quite another personality. It had become a question between the survival of the Cecils and the Cecil idea and the survival of Lord Randolph and Tory Democracy. Lord Randolph had sneered at Mr. Gladstone as " an old man in a hurry." He himself was still a young man, by all recent political standards a very young man. He was only in his late thirties. But he was in an even greater hurry than Mr. Gladstone in his middle seventies. It is said that after the defeat of the Salisbury Government in 1885 a friend asked him the course of events. " I shall lead the Opposition for five years," he replied. " Then I shall be Prime Minister for five years. Then I shall die." Only one-third of this prediction was fulfilled, but that was fulfilled to the letter, or rather the figure ; the estimate of his span of life was almost exact. This sense, which oppressed him from an early age, that he had not long to live, was doubtless the explanation of much. He could not wait ; unless the things he wanted came quickly they were useless. Hence, probably, his break with the Cecils on a detail of finance. It was a matter in itself capable of easy accommodation. But the real reasons for the rupture were real indeed. A very little experience in office had shown Lord Randolph that, while the substantial men of Conservatism had been tolerant of, if not actually enraptured with, " Tory Democracy " as a

bait for the voter, the last thing they intended to suffer was Tory Democracy in terms of legislation. His great Budget at first affected the solid Tories of the Cabinet much as the glare of the boa-constrictor does the rabbit. They listened in helpless and fascinated silence to the grandiose plan, involving much of that " spoliation " so often denounced since in " revolutionary " Chancellors of the Exchequer, and for a moment it seemed as if the audacious young Minister had won by the sheer momentum of his attack. But this dazed half-acquiescence did not long endure. Was it for this, the country gentlemen asked, that they had beaten the Radicals? And they shudderingly recalled the recent Dartford speech, in which Lord Randolph had outlined a programme of reform which *The Times* described as " recalling the palmy days of Mr. Gladstone." So the Dartford programme was conscientiously emasculated. " I see it crumbling into pieces every day," wrote Lord Randolph to Lord Salisbury in November, 1886. " I am afraid it is an idle schoolboy's dream to suppose that Tories can legislate, as I did stupidly. They can govern and make war and increase taxation and expenditure *à merveille*, but legislation is not their province in a democratic constitution."

The great question, of course, was how Lord Salisbury would act. He was not, on some points, a quite typical Conservative, though his main object, like that later of Mr. Balfour, was to avoid change as much as possible. He had been heartily with Lord Randolph in Opposition. He had approved the Churchillian programme. He was not insensible to the fact that many of the younger elements in the Conservative Party were sympathetic to it. But temperamentally Lord Salisbury was averse to the whole scheme of Tory Democracy, except perhaps as a piece of protective make-believe. If the " classes and dependents of class " could be persuaded to

accept something that would cover Lord Randolph's election pledges, well and good. But if it were a choice between the support of those classes on the one hand and on the other " trusting to public meetings and the democratic forces generally to carry you through," then his verdict was for " work at less speed and at a lower temperature than our opponents." When the Prime Minister had arrived at this decision there were only two courses open to Lord Randolph. In fact, there was really only one. For it was not possible for him, as for so many men, to accept the rebuff with feigned cheerfulness, to eat his own words, to defend a policy not his own, and adroitly explain away the absence of a policy that was his. His audacity (so far brilliantly successful), his hot temper, his proud and intractable spirit, and perhaps, above all, his slight expectation of long life, forbade his waiting with the patience of Disraeli for the chances time might bring. It is not surprising that he decided to leave the Cabinet with the notion of being recalled on his own terms ; the astonishing thing is that a man of so strong a sense of tactics should on this occasion have played so completely into the hands of his opponents. The man of strategy placed himself in a position to receive every kind of fire without the possibility of effective return. The man of drama contrived to reserve for Christmastime, when no political explosion can vie in interest with the domestic cracker, the announcement of his resignation. If he had pondered deeply on the means of sinking himself deeper than e'er plummet sounded, he could hardly have chosen, in gross and in detail, a better method. Not Goschen, but his own rashness, made his fall like Lucifer's.

The truth, no doubt, was that he seriously miscalculated the strength of his position. He made the clever man's mistake of under-rating dull men, forgetting the patience of their malice and the per-

fection of their hypocrisy. There were people with great names and claims, but little brains, who had cried " Hosannah ! " as loudly as any in public, but never ceased to mutter " Crucify him " in the Carlton Club arm-chairs. He had invaded all kinds of prescriptive rights, had smothered all sorts of peddling ambitions, had trodden heavily on the tail of Tadpole and pulled unceremoniously the nose of Taper. Success like his was bound in any case to create an imposing array of enemies ; he rather unnecessarily assisted in their manufacture. With intimates, indeed, and those who came into close official relation with him, he could be charming ; his manner ranged from the airiest and easiest familiarity to an old-fashioned courtesy rather strangely in contrast with his boyish face and dandyish figure. But he rarely troubled whether a chance word hurt unimportant people, and the great misery of politics is that nobody can safely be classed as unimportant. " Why will you insist on being an Ishmael—your hand against every man ? " asked Mr. Chamberlain (first enemy, then friend, then enemy again) when, not content with his other troubles, Churchill went out of his way to attack a warm friend and well-wisher. There was a good deal of the Ishmaelite in Lord Randolph ; his nerves seemed to demand the stimulus of combat, and in the absence of war he was given to the duel. But other men have triumphed over equal difficulties, and more is needed to explain the sudden and final failure of Lord Randolph. That the showy edifice he had erected disappeared almost as suddenly as the palace of Aladdin was due as much to the character of the material as to that of the architect. He had used the actual bricks of nineteenth-century Toryism, but the mortar he employed was no more binding than snow or butter. Something very like genius enabled him to make his house look strong and habitable—so long as it was

uninhabited. But with the very day of the house-warming the mischief began.

The career of Lord Randolph, in short, was founded on a hatred and an illusion. The hatred was for the middle class. The illusion was that the Conservative Party was still the party of aristocracy, that the old quarrel between the landowner on the one side and the banker, the manufacturer and the tradesman on the other, yet persisted. He failed, not because he was before, but because he was behind his time. His dislike of the middle class was seldom hidden. Nearly every contemptuous figure he invented was suggested either by trade or by the vanities of rich tradesmen. Mr. Chamberlain, because he had made money and not inherited it, was attacked for " bandying vulgar compliments " with the young Earl of Durham. Mr. Gladstone was sneered at for living in a " castle," not because he was a Liberal, but because he was of middle-class origin. A public man of old descent might have amused himself in chopping down one of his ancestral oaks without scornful comment from Lord Randolph. But it was intolerable, in the circumstances, that the forest should " lament, in order that Mr. Gladstone may perspire." " Marshall and Snelgrove of debate," " lords of suburban villas, owners of vineries and pineries "—a score of such expressions of contempt for the successful middle-class man could be culled at random from Churchill's speeches, and they account for much of the orator's success with working-class audiences. But though, in the revulsion against the views fashionable a little earlier, he could command much popular applause, though he could inflict great damage on the Liberal claim to represent the masses, he could, no more than Disraeli, translate his own dream of " Tory Democracy " into reality. For the Tory Party was now itself very largely middle class and only very slightly democratic. It regarded Lord

Randolph's creed much as Lord Palmerston did the Christian religion—excellent in its own place, but it must not intrude in practical affairs. The party might have forgiven him if quite convinced of his insincerity. It destroyed him on the first suspicion that he might actually be in downright earnest.

It would have been better for Lord Randolph's fame had Fate struck once and struck no more. For him was reserved a crueller destiny. The Eighties saw his brief splendours. The Nineties witnessed only the culmination of his slow and mournful decline. He himself seems hardly to have been aware of the ravages which disease and disappointment had wrought on his fine intellect, and the latter scenes were scarcely less painful to his more generous antagonists than to the few friends who still refused to believe that he was an exhausted man and a spent political force. Nobody is more quickly forgotten than a living politician who has ceased to count, and when the end came it was with an almost ridiculous sense of remoteness that the average member of the public read the inevitable homilies on Lord Randolph's strange and sad career. He had written his name in water and builded his house on the sands.

CHAPTER XI

HERBERT SPENCER

I REMEMBER hearing a Nonconformist divine of the Nineties denounce the young man who, instead of taking a class, spent his Sunday afternoon "reading Herbert Spencer."

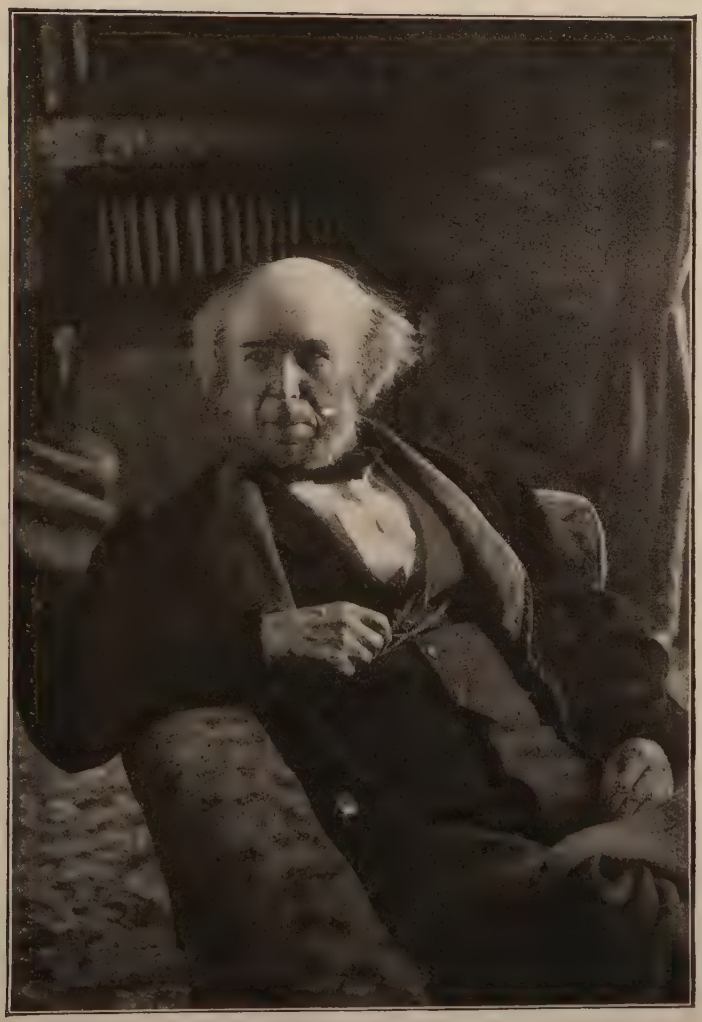
It struck me at the time that the reverend gentleman was fighting an unusually extinct Satan. For even in the Nineties the number of young men who desecrated the Sabbath in this particular fashion was very small. Herbert Spencer had reached the stage of being much quoted and little read. Indeed, the reverence in which he was held had a strong resemblance to that which men pay to the departing or the departed. Lord Morley has quoted a competent critic who warned him, a day or two before the last volume of Spencer's work was published, that the system expounded by him was, if not already dead, at least on the eve of death.

But if that were the case in England, it was by no means so in a country in which Herbert Spencer had shown from time to time considerable interest. The new agnostic Empire of Japan had taken most kindly to the Spencerian philosophy, partly because it was exceedingly prosaic and partly because it put forward a rather arrogant pretension to finality. The Japanese is intensely matter-of-fact, which is by no means the same thing as being practical, and is often the reverse of being practical; thus a Japanese engineer, in giving an estimate for a factory or a railway, will often state the cost to a fraction of a

farthing—and in the end prove inaccurate by hundreds of thousands of pounds. This trait is in no way connected with stupidity: it is part of the character of a people wholly in love with formality, and dominated by a tyrannical passion for neatness of arrangement. The Japanese loves to pack his ideas, and dovetail them with one another, with the same precision with which he makes two dozen lacquer boxes fit into one, or constructs a house to hold exactly eight hundred and twenty floor-mats, each of just the same size, without an inch to spare.

What enchanted the Japanese was Herbert Spencer's solemn way of assuming that the heavens and the earth, and all that in them is, all space, all time, all life, and all humanity could be measured and reckoned up to a millimetre or a half-centime by his particular philosophical abacus. During the Nineties the Herbert Spencer school was extraordinarily potent in Japan. At the head of it was that remarkable man, Professor Fukuzawa, who, more than any other, was responsible for supplying the moral and philosophical basis of the new Japanese civilisation. Occasionally the English master favoured his Oriental disciples with an encyclical, applauding them for their skill in keeping the masterful European at bay, and giving them hints as to how best they could realise a perfect morality unalloyed with the smallest taint of the superstition which still disgraced (and was almost necessary to) the West. At one time Herbert Spencer had apparently great hopes that Japan might realise his ideal of the State in which men are guided wholly by reason—a State untainted with imperialism, militarism, aristocratic prejudice, or ecclesiastical faddism.

Japan's subsequent essays in self-revelation are a sufficient commentary on these facts. In one sense Japan may still be called a Spencerian country; unread here, the philosopher is still conned by



HERBERT SPENCER.

hundreds of thousands of eager students in the Eastern Empire ; he has been expanded and adopted by a whole succession of native pedants. Japan still admires the synthetic philosophy, but remains aristocratic, bureaucratic, imperialistic, and militarist. Most truly she does not copy the West, but makes what she borrows her own. Herbert Spencer, who was really not far from an anarchist, has been converted into one of the chief buttresses of the State which is the nearest approach extant to the Prussianised German Empire.

It must have been something of a shock, for those Japanese who had grown up in the Spencerian dogma, to meet Herbert Spencer in the flesh. Baron Kikuchi has recorded an impression of Spencer going on a railway journey in the Nineties. For such an expedition great preparations were necessary. A hammock was slung diagonally across a saloon carriage ; into this the philosopher was hoisted just before the train started, and from its depths he was laboriously recovered at the journey's end. All this ritual Baron Kikuchi witnessed at Paddington. " What," he says, " surprised the onlooker after seeing the hammock slung and the cushions carefully packed into it was to see a fresh-complexioned gentleman proceed from a waiting-room where he had been reclining in an invalid chair, walk nimbly across the platform, and then be hoisted into the hammock."

There was at every stage of Spencer's life this singular contrast between the self-sufficiency of his speculative habit and his mournful physical dependence. He lived till his eighty-third year ; he was not cursed with a specially feeble constitution ; but he coddled himself into a state of body which is, to a very considerable extent, an explanation of his state of mind. The sedentary thinker is prone to two opposite errors. Like Carlyle, Froude, or Treitschke, he may become an extravagant admirer of mere

strength. Or, perhaps like Mr. Wells, and certainly like Mr. Galsworthy to-day, he may quite unduly depreciate the value of the qualities of ordinary mankind. Herbert Spencer's whole thought was vitiated by the valetudinarian's contempt for things in which he could have little part. He not merely undervalued physical courage ; he even saw in it something ridiculous or indelicate. On the other hand, he altogether over-appraised the kind of moral courage which reveals itself in disputatiousness. It was his lot to live in a period when heterodoxy involved no serious danger or inconvenience, and at the same time earned for its professor the reputation of intellectual daring and distinction. Thus he enjoyed most of the luxuries with few of the pangs of martyrdom ; he felt all the thrills of conflict without running any of the risks ; in his kind of warfare the worst that could happen was a hurt to his feelings, and against that he was protected by a vanity of triple proof. But thought that involves the thinker in no kind of responsibility tends to be irresponsible ; and though Spencer boasted that he " developed his ideas rationally "—so that he did not get wrinkled like inferior men " who think from the outside "—few men were in truth more under the dominion of prejudice ; nearly everything he wrote on matters of human concern was influenced by the fact that he was excessively vain, timid, and self-indulgent.

" It was one of my misfortunes," he wrote in his autobiography, " to have no brothers, and a still greater misfortune to have no sisters." Brothers and sisters are blessings—or otherwise—that the gods give or deny us. But most men can get a wife if they really want one. Spencer's lack of a wife was probably a greater handicap than the absence of brothers and sisters. For whatever arguments there may be in favour of a celibate priesthood, the celibate social philosopher most obviously suffers from a grave dis-

advantage ; he lacks both the knowledge and the discipline that prevent men of thought becoming mere pedants and theorists. No doubt a wife would not have helped Spencer to write more profoundly about the limits of the unknowable. But she and hers would have given him a far juster impression of a large slice of the knowable. Perpetually lecturing married, child-rearing, householding, and taxpaying men, Spencer passed his own life as a fussy bachelor in a succession of boarding-houses, and can hardly have paid income-tax during a great part of it. We find him as early as the middle of the century in a " fairly lively boarding-house " in St. John's Wood, Huxley having warned him that he must not live a solitary life. At the beginning of the Nineties he made almost a home in a quiet street in the neighbourhood of Regent's Park ; but towards the end of the period (and of his life) he found that gardens and trees were poor company, and, longing for the breadth and openness of the sea, removed to Brighton. Wherever he lived, he was something of a tyrant, and very much of a crank. In his fits of depression he insisted on being carried upstairs and down in an invalid chair, and seemed never to realise that his very considerable weight was an unfair burden to a man-servant and a maid. When he was (or thought himself) ill, his bell was perpetually ringing. " Few men," writes (very acutely) one of the ladies who kept house for him in his seventies, " are so thoughtful and considerate as he was, or so oblivious to the trouble and inconvenience they cause."

If there was " never yet philosopher who could endure the toothache patiently," there have been many in all times above the smaller miseries which involve no actual torture. Herbert Spencer was none of these. It is at once painful and amusing to contrast the tone of his philosophical dissertations with that of his lamentations over some discomfort

which a normal man would dismiss with an energetic monosyllable. The mind revealed in the printed page as disdainfully careless of any consideration but truth, which could face without a shudder the dread emptiness of eternity as Spencer imagined it, was in private occupied with all kinds of old-maidish whims. His bed " had to be made with a hard bolster beneath the mattress, raising a hump for the small of his back, while the clothes had a pleat down the centre, so that they never strained but fell in folds around him." He devoted an enormous amount of thought to his ear-stoppers ; at that time he could not live out of London, and yet he could not bear the noise of London ; so that he " corked " himself, after the manner of Miss Betsy Trotwood, whether at the club or at his lodgings. He liked whiting for breakfast, and disliked haddock, and if haddock were served he was full of complaints about the " gross defects of integration, co-ordination, or whatever else the attendant molecular shortcoming might be." " Moral training," he once said, " should come into every branch of education, even that of cookery." On a steamer he once created quite a scene because Stilton was served when he had ordered Cheddar. " Oh, the hardness of heart of these inveterate men ! Oh, the accursed cruelty of their inhuman persecutions ! " exclaimed Mr. Stiggins when informed that he could not have the " wanity " called pine-apple rum with three lumps of sugar to the tumbler. The great Victorian philosopher was scarcely less eloquent over minute inconveniences and deprivations.

The Athenæum Club had a large part in his life at this time. Elected at the age of forty-seven, he served for about seven years on the committee, but a self-admitted " lack of tact " interfered with his usefulness. Numberless stories are told of his pettishness when other members unconsciously offended. He used to drive almost daily from his lodgings to

the Club, but would often stop the cab in the middle of Regent Street or some equally busy thoroughfare in order to feel his pulse. If it was regular he went on ; if not he gave the order to return home. These habits of invalidism dated very far back. From the age of thirty, when he had some sort of nervous break-down, he was continually engaged in self-analysis. There appeared to be really nothing very much the matter with him. " Appetite and digestion," he himself says, " were both good, and my bodily strength seemingly not less than it had been." But he slept badly : " Ordinarily my nights had from a dozen to a score wakings. For twenty-five years I never experienced drowsiness." Possibly if he had acted a little more on instinct, and a little less on reason, things would have settled themselves ; other people have managed better with worse handicaps. But he so carefully avoided one thing because he thought it did him harm, and so sedulously cultivated another because he thought it did him good, that for him the mere act of living was a business in itself. Thus he found racquets " conducive to mental calm," and so played a game between the intervals of dictation ; he dictated because he found his head would better bear that strain than writing. Sometimes he sculled in the Serpentine in order to soothe himself into tranquillity ; for some time he took up vegetarianism, thinking it would be beneficial, but found that he had to rewrite what he had written during the time he was a vegetarian, because it was so " wanting in vigour." With the same aim in view he took up billiards, fished, played cards, and sometimes occupied himself with a little shopping. We have a glimpse of him seeking a bronze for his sitting-room, but unsuccessfully, since the last available models were all French, and " French art, when not frivolous, is obscene." His æsthetic instincts were indeed singular ; his favourite colour was " impure

purple," and it is believed that when the blue flowers in his dining-room carpet faded, he employed a charwoman to stain them with red ink!

Something of his hypochondriac and introspective disposition was no doubt hereditary. Spencer describes his forebears as late to contract marriage, and much given to forecasting—everywhere their record shows " a contemplation of remote results rather than immediate results, joined with an insistence of the first as compared with that of the last." Thinking, possibly, that this very Spencerian jargon needed translation into the vernacular, he summarises the whole family character as prone to " dwell too much upon possible forthcoming events." Spencer's father and grandfather were both schoolmasters, who had never done any kind of manual work, and he derived from them a hand " smaller than the average woman's." The father, a Wesleyan, who afterwards joined the Quakers, bequeathed to him a " repugnance to priestly rule and priestly ceremonies," and probably something of his disposition to question all authority. The elder Spencer was, indeed, a curious combination of the ascetic and the latitudinarian ; himself piously self-disciplined, he disliked applying any sort of coercion to others. Thus novel-reading was not " positively forbidden " to Herbert, but " there were impediments," and he knew nothing in childhood of the stories with which children commonly become familiar. How much he would have gained or lost by an occasional thrashing balanced by *Gulliver* and the *Arabian Nights* is a question for curious speculation. In the absence of the thrashing young Spencer —it is himself who speaks—was guilty of " chronic disobedience," and developed his " most marked moral trait—a disregard of authority." His uncle, a clergyman, to whom he was sent at the age of thirteen, describes him as having " no fear of the Lord nor fear of any law or authority." On the former

point the uncle was an excellent professional judge ; on the latter, the fact that Herbert promptly ran away from the Vicarage, walking home (a distance of 120 miles) in three days, is sufficiently indicative. Under the tuition of this orthodox disciplinarian Spencer acquired some knowledge of mathematics, a little Latin, less Greek, and scarcely anything besides.

His first idea of getting a living was teaching ; but his uncle obtained him an opening in civil engineering, and he started work on the London and Birmingham railway. But, as ever, he was much more inclined to teach other people their business than to learn his own ; he objected, also, to over-work ; and it " never entered into his thoughts to ingratiate himself with those above him." He was, in fact, quite unfit to be " integrated "—to use his own favourite expression—in any corporate scheme : too self-centred, too disputatious, too thoughtful of his own small wants and comforts. In politics it was the same ; he first mixed himself up with the Chartists, but soon found it necessary to unmix, as the Chartists were " too fanatical to work with," and finally decided, no doubt wisely, for the lonely liberty of letters. It was only by following his trade as an engineer, however, that he could keep going until, in his twenty-eighth year, a position on the *Economist*, worth a hundred guineas a year, enabled him to begin serious work on his *Social Statics*. Like all his books, this involved him in some first loss ; and but for two small legacies and the little property his father left, he would have been unable to carry on. He could, of course, have earned money in the way so many men do—by hack work. But he had no idea of " getting on," not that he had any contempt for money, or disdain for the things money buys, but it was " not worth the bother " ; work as work he always disliked. He was always warning his friends against over-work, and his protests against bearing any part of the

curse of Adam were often nothing but unmanly. " On the whole," he wrote to a friend at thirty-one, " I am quite decided not to be a drudge, and as I see no probability of being able to marry without being a drudge, why, I have pretty well given up the idea."

One advantage of not being a drudge was that he could choose his company, and even " glare " at Carlyle in disapproval of the " absurd dogmas " (so imperfectly " co-ordinated ") of that sage ; another that he could find leisure to sing part-songs with George Eliot ; another that he could coddle himself to his heart's content. But such very limited independence is a little irksome, and now and again he got restive over limited means, and even took abortive steps to get some Government employment which (at the public expense) would leave him ample time for his private work. He was fifty before " adverse circumstances " had ceased to worry him, and by this time he had advanced far in invalidism. In the Nineties his work was for all practical purposes over. He had achieved a singular position. A great legend with the public, he was something of a small jest with the rather narrow circle of his familiar acquaintance. It was possible for people who knew only his name and his writings to yield for his work the admiration it really deserved, not so much for the success of the achievement as for the splendid audacity (and even impudence) of the design. The young man who really read him on " Sunday afternoons " might picture the great sceptic as peering with stern and steadfast eyes into reality, unafraid of all save intellectual dishonesty. The enthusiast for social justice might rejoice to see him haling to the bar of eternal reason (not far from the leader page of *The Times*) this or that temporary political offender against the laws of correct " integration " and " co-ordination." The remote revolutionary struggling more or less rightly to be free might

welcome his as the authentic voice of intellectual England. But those who knew him mingled a smile with their reverence. They might recognise his single-mindedness and his uncompromising " honesty in ideas." They might value him as a " great thinker," while possibly deploring that he was also a crank of the most voluminous and pertinacious kind. But whether they admired wholly or with reservations, they could hardly avoid feeling a " very tragical mirth " over the contrast between the philosophy and the philosopher. The personality of the preacher, of course, does not affect the truth of the gospel, but it cannot but affect men's reception of the gospel; and it was not easy for those who knew Herbert Spencer intimately, and were aware how a fast-trotting cab-horse would disorder his pulse for a week, to take quite seriously all his contributions to the intellectual output of his time.

As to the philosophy itself, three brief sentences from contemporaries have a certain justice. " To Spencer," said Huxley, " tragedy is represented by a deduction spoiled by a fact." " Spencer," said Professor Sidgwick, " suffered from the fault of fatuous self-confidence." " You have such a passion for generalising," said George Eliot, " you even fish with a generalisation."

CHAPTER XII

MR. CHAMBERLAIN AND MR. BALFOUR

THE life of Mr. Joseph Chamberlain, like that of the Chevalier d'Artagnan, was spent in three sets of duels. The first was with a great man's men ; the second was with the great man himself ; the third was with an old friend made out of a still older enemy. The first were duels of routine, provoking no great feeling—deadly, it might be, but unenvenomed ; the second were duels of policy, in which awe and the instinct of self-preservation were as much elements as hatred ; the third were duels of fatality, in which a certain courtesy and kindliness had always to be observed.

For Lord Hartington and such as he Mr. Chamberlain had as little consideration as d'Artagnan for the Cardinal's unfortunate Guards ; against Mr. Gladstone himself, though he could not shake off a certain reverence, he fought with full vigour and single purpose ; but when Destiny ultimately forced him to enter into a contest of blades and wits with that elegant Aramis, Arthur James Balfour, he found himself constrained by a hundred scruples and a thousand memories, and, like d'Artagnan, he failed. The story ran into many chapters, in some of which the more trenchant swordsman got the upper hand, and in some of which the more subtle mind triumphed, but in the last chapter of all it was d'Artagnan who had fallen and Aramis who was only exiled.

The Nineties saw the beginning of that singular competition between friendly (or at least not un-

(From a photograph by Messrs. Russell.)

JOSEPH CHAMBERLAIN.

friendly) incompatibles which has affected the whole course of modern history. At the beginning of the decade Mr. Balfour enjoyed a prestige remarkable enough in itself, but quite marvellous when it was remembered that only five years before he had been a comparatively unmarked man, while at the beginning of the Eighties he was regarded as little more than an elegant trifler. He had seemingly succeeded in Ireland; Parnell was dead; the formidable solidarity of the Nationalist Party was no more; the growing recovery of Gladstonian Liberalism had been fatally interrupted. A strong rival had gone to pieces through the mental and physical decay of Lord Randolph Churchill; there were none to compare with Mr. Balfour among the younger men of Unionism, and the men of the old guard (as was seen when Mr. W. H. Smith's death left vacant the leadership of the House of Commons) were reluctant to place their antique sword-play in disadvantageous contrast with his neat rapier work. Lord Salisbury was growing old and becoming more and more the hermit of the Foreign Office; and it seemed only a matter of a few years before Mr. Balfour would be unchallenged master of what, since the Home Rule split, was by far the greatest party in England.

To this political prestige was added a social worship seldom accorded to statesmen. Mr. Balfour was still young; he was a bachelor; he was handsome; with the exception, perhaps, of Lord Rosebery, he was the most generally interesting man in politics. There have been very few politicians who have held at the same time such a position in many worlds as that occupied by Lord Salisbury's nephew at the beginning of the Nineties.

Mr. Chamberlain, on the other hand, was perhaps less a figure than he had been five, or even ten years before. Had he died when Parnell did he would chiefly be remembered now as a politician who, in

splitting his party, had ruined his own career. Partiality or malignity would have filled in the outline with colours gracious or repellent; he might have been represented as an honest man who suffered for his integrity, or as a schemer who overreached himself. But the main fact would have been clear—that the promise of the Eighties had no more been fulfilled than that of the Seventies; the great Imperialist we know would have been as little realised as the great democratic iconoclast who might have been. It was the Nineties which determined Mr. Chamberlain's place in history; had he not reached them, his title to greatness could not be established; had he not survived them, his stature would be much what it now is. Mr. Chamberlain's larger career begins only with his assumption of major office in 1895; it ends, for all practical purposes, with his resignation of that office a little more than eight years later. There was an over-long first act, and a tragically protracted third, but the pith of the play is the tenure of the Colonial Secretaryship.

One of Mr. Balfour's weaknesses resided in his inability to encourage, or even to suffer, friendship on equal terms. This Prince Arthur knew nothing of the Round Table; his colleagues in the special sense must always be in every sense his subordinates; and when he found a difficulty in getting men of strong individuality to accept such a position, he got over the difficulty by appointing men of no particular individuality. It was, on the other hand, a main strength of Mr. Chamberlain that he invited, and even compelled, either full hostility or full friendship. Those who were against him, were heartily against him; those who were for him, were for him heart and soul; and the world is happily so constituted that hearty love nearly always triumphs over hearty hatred. It was, I imagine, Mr. Chamberlain's "genius for friendship," as Lord Morley calls it, that

explained most things that are not accounted for by his splendid debating powers and his aptitude for moving great masses of men. Concerning this last faculty, fascinated contemporaries were perhaps inclined to exaggerate. Beside the Victorian heavyweights Mr. Chamberlain was no doubt a marvel of demagogic art. He could say supremely well what the average man felt a difficulty in putting into words. He was intensely sensitive to changes in public feeling, and extraordinarily clever in just anticipating them. He had a great knack of condensing into one sharp and memorable phrase the idea he wanted to sink deep into the public mind. But he was not an orator in the sense that John Bright was, and he lacked the capacity of Lord Randolph Churchill, in his best days, of whipping a popular audience into yelling, laughing, almost hysterical sympathy. Nor should I place him on a level with the one living man who always challenges a comparison with him—I mean Mr. Lloyd George. There are times when the Prime Minister can almost bring a tear into the most tired old eye, and stimulate to an extra throb or two the driest of old hearts. The next moment the owner of these organs may sneer at himself, or at the speaker; but there it is—the effect has been produced. Personally, I never found Mr. Chamberlain affect me, though neither old nor incapable of impression, in that way. The thing he seemed most to lack was glamour. It was present in the solemn periods of Bright; it was often not absent from the stately cadences of Gladstone; it was, in another way, felt in the detached mordancies of one Cecil and the daintily constructed dilemmas of another; Joseph Chamberlain's speech wanted it hardly less than Mr. Asquith's. He had more fire, energy, and passion, than Mr. Asquith, but hardly more "juice." He could say strong (even violent) things, neat things, hard things, fine things, occasionally even humorous

things. But he always (at least, I found it so) failed to say things that touched what Mr. Guppy called "chords in the human mind," or made the hearer feel that there was more in the speaker than he could ever make articulate. The whole perfection of his public speaking consisted, indeed, in a quite different kind of appeal. He depended for his effect on illuminating equally every detail of the picture he wished to present. His speeches were really verbal transparencies, with (as in the cinema shows) a very short legend under each section of the film giving in the clearest possible way the moral he intended to convey—"Will you take it lying down?" or what not. Now a transparency can do much, but it cannot raise a true thrill; the "movies" are capable of everything but moving, and their popularity has probably much to do with ultra-modern insensibility.

Mr. Chamberlain's style was exactly fitted for most of his purposes. It was literary in no contemptible degree—his strong and simple phraseology appeals more to a present-day taste than the elephantine grandeur of his older contemporaries—and he had something of a genius for the kind of epigram which is a real compression of thought, and not a mere rhetorical trick. But the style was neither a vehicle for profound and exact thought, nor an outlet for high and splendid feeling. He failed always when he attempted to deal with a very complex and extensive theme: his serious Tariff Reform and Irish speeches are, in the reading, quite thin and inadequate. He failed also when he tried to appeal to the imponderables: his "illimitable veldt" mood simply would not convince. But he could scoff as no other; his personal attacks were far more wounding than Lord Randolph's, partly, no doubt, because there was behind them a far deadlier purpose than anyone believed to be present in the Randolphian impishness; he could impart to what in another man would have

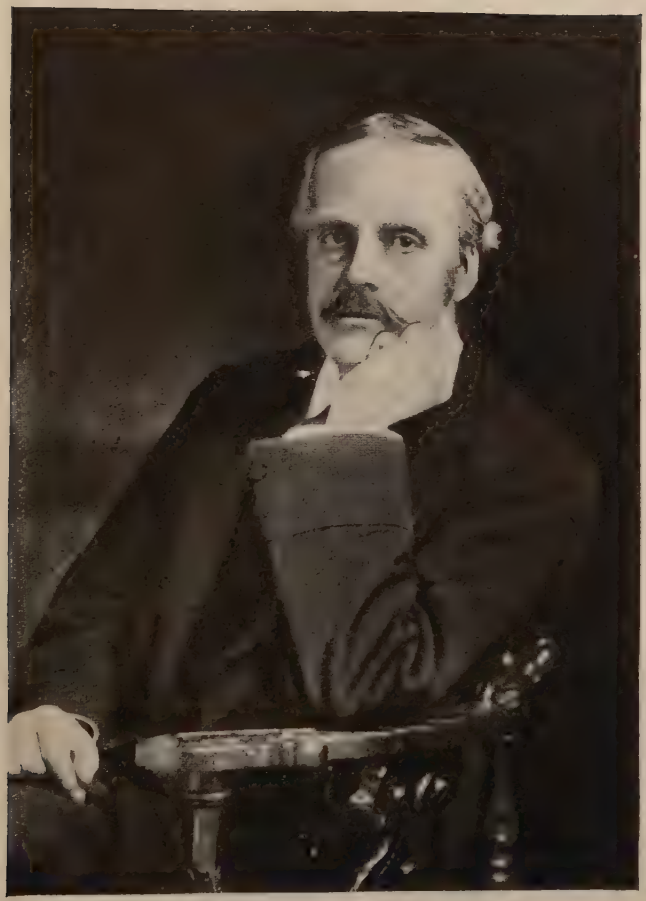
been a mere rudeness something of the terror of the thunderbolt ; and none could work more skilfully on passions which are, in relation to the higher patriotism, what the camp-follower is to the warrior.

But when all is said, it is possible to maintain that Mr. Chamberlain as a debater reached far higher levels than any he attained, even at his highest, as a platform orator. There never was a time when he was not heard with attention in the House of Commons. One reason was that he was heartily interested in the place, in its ways and forms, its juntas, caves, intrigues, plans of obstruction, moves and counter-moves, plots and counter-plots, and " monkey-tricks " of all descriptions ; that " industrious idleness " which repels so many earnest men was to him both important and amusing. Even the appalling physical atmosphere—the drowned light and the cooked air—suited his taste. For he was Victorian in his dislike of fresh air—or at any rate in his independence of it—and he and Lord Brampton, who shivered whenever an air from heaven penetrated his over-heated court, might have lived very comfortably together. It was not, perhaps, quite a coincidence that his favourite flower was the orchid, and that at Highbury he spent a large part of his leisure in the green-houses. Time was when he was to pay an appalling price for his aversion to open-air exercise, but during his years of vigour no man could have suffered less from those horrible conditions which explain much of the lethargy of the faithful Commons.

He loved, moreover, the good comradeship that political life engenders ; to a certain type of man it is the main compensation of the career. There is more zest in broiled bones where plotting is than in a stalled ox consumed in placidity. None enjoyed better than Joseph Chamberlain the meal conspiratorial, the meal triumphal, the meal consolatory ; good dining was, indeed, one of his most unfailing pleasures ;

like Talleyrand, he might have said, "Show me another which renews itself three times a day, and lasts an hour each time." And it must be allowed that he had the greatest talents both as a host and as a guest. Those who knew him best acclaim him as a most admirable talker, and withal a fair and considerate one, never indulging in a conversational solitaire, but treating prandial chat as a round game in which every player must have his turn. This genial equalitarianism was one of his great advantages over Mr. Gladstone, who often failed to make fellow-diners forget his greatness.

This interest in Parliament and whatever appertained to it was no doubt a great part of the secret of Mr. Chamberlain's power over that assembly. We often forget how large a share mere appetite has in the realisation of political ambitions, how far the simple capacity of being and remaining interested will take a man even of moderate capacity. But another important factor in Mr. Chamberlain's supremacy as a debater was the real, if sometimes limited, knowledge he brought to the discussion of any subject in which he happened to be interested—and he happened to be interested in most. Deep knowledge, living at the rate he did, he could hardly hope to attain; at any rate, he seldom attained it. But he had an almost journalistic faculty of using reference books—reference books, Dickens, and French novels were almost all his reading. Mr. Balfour always hated to "prepare." Mr. Chamberlain would take any degree of trouble to prime himself with the facts necessary for his purpose; all other facts, of course, he disregarded. Thus he was always a formidable man to attack, and as an assailant he was deadly. His sure instinct for the weak side of an opponent's case, his command of invective and destructive analysis, above all, his capacity of fervently and sincerely hating whatever he temporarily disapproved (even if it had been his



ARTHUR BALFOUR.

own opinion the day before) gave him a power of which he was himself probably not fully aware; otherwise, kindly as he was at bottom, he would scarcely have treated, as he sometimes did, quite petty antagonists with a severity verging on the inhuman.

It may be doubted, however, whether his qualities of speech, and even his powers as an administrator, would have sufficed to give Mr. Chamberlain his immense influence if they had not been supplemented by his knack of enchaining the personal affections of many kinds of men. There was a charm about him which is only felt in its highest expression in relation to a very strong character, but which is apt to be absent in characters of unusual strength. It was this charm which made the loss of his intimate friendship the most serious sacrifice John Morley offered on the altar of political consistency in 1886. It was a charm felt by all kinds of men who disliked his opinions and distrusted his judgment. Under its sway came many cool Colonials and still cooler Americans. It sufficed to keep Mr. Balfour his friend even when he was straining every faculty of his subtle nature to defeat Mr. Chamberlain's most cherished ambitions. Of those associated with Mr. Chamberlain at various times, only three considerable men—Mr. Gladstone, Lord Hartington, and Lord Salisbury—seem to have been able to view him with consistent objectivity. On those who yielded to him their full allegiance his influence was quite extraordinary. No statesman ever enjoyed such absolutely unquestioning devotion as that which was yielded to Mr. Chamberlain by Mr. Jesse Collings and the other members of his personal retinue. On the other hand, there never was so splendidly steadfast a lord and protector. The Birmingham communion was as jealous and as generous as that of Rome. None could be admitted without giving up the last shred

of pretension to independent thought. But once the sacrifice was made there was peace and security for the true believer. A powerful hand protected, a lavish hand provided, a paternal hand petted and patted. Mr. Chamberlain was the safer in making enemies for the solid certainty with which he built up his friendships, however humble. A tower of strength during his life, they have ensured his repute since his death.

Before 1895 that repute rested mainly on negatives. There had been, indeed, an early extra-Parliamentary period of great local achievement ; it was his municipal work which gave Mr. Chamberlain for the rest of his life the kingship of Birmingham and its hinterland. There had been some small official work and the much larger prestige (now, however, largely forgotten on one side and forgiven on the other) of the " ransom " speeches. But for nearly ten years Mr. Chamberlain had been chiefly engaged in destructive energies ; the duel with Gladstone employed him to the exclusion of most other things while the great veteran remained on the ground. It was as late as 1893 that he delivered that taunt—" It is the voice of a god and not of a man ; never since the time of Herod has there been such slavish adulation "—which caused the famous free fight in the House of Commons. But by the middle of the decade the Home Rule fight, for the time, had been fought out. The electors had approved the slaughter of the Second Home Rule Bill ; Mr. Gladstone had disappeared ; Lord Rosebery and Sir William Harcourt were fighting like lion and unicorn for the shadow of a crown ; the task of opposition in a House overwhelmingly Unionist had been contemptuously left to " C.-B." The world was Mr. Chamberlain's where to choose. He chose the Colonies, and the portals of the dullest of routine departments at once had to be watched as if they were those of the ancient temple

of Janus. Within a few months came the Jameson raid ; then the whole world held its breath while an English general and a French major exchanged ironic civilities at Fashoda ; then succeeded the short game of bluff which ended in the long and bloody game of war with the South African Republics.

We are still too near that event for a judicial finding, and any man's view is only a view. The finding, when it comes, is as little likely to make Paul Kruger the hero as it is to make Joseph Chamberlain the villain ; the affair was no doubt, like most such things, a very mixed matter. Mr. Chamberlain would probably have taken more pains to avoid war had the Boer Republics possessed the power of the late German Empire ; his critics would probably have been less numerous and bitter if the affair had cost ten millions and been over in three weeks. Stones were cast at him in great quantity, and no doubt some came from hands that had a right to throw ; but some of the largest were certainly hurled by those who have since laid themselves open to equally serious charges of preferring the way of war to the way of peace. But, whatever the degree of his responsibility—and he always manfully accepted full responsibility—we can with safety acquit Mr. Chamberlain of those motives with which the ungenerous were eager to credit him. It was assuredly no mere hunger for applause that hurried him into a war which he imagined would be short, cheap, and (by all analogy then recent) comparatively bloodless. There was, indeed, a small, politician-like, electioneering, popularity-loving side to Joseph Chamberlain, and it is useless (and somewhat ignoble) on the part of his admirers to ignore it. He was himself far too big to pretend that it did not exist. He never assumed the virtues he knew himself not to possess ; he went to the opposite, but more manful extreme, of scorning them. Thus he cared nothing at all

about charges of inconsistency. "What I have said I have said. Do I contradict myself? Very well, then I contradict myself. I am not a slave to other men's theories or to my own past." Again: "The man who thinks of the future is a visionary; the man who thinks of the past is a fool; I think only of the present twenty-four hours." But if there was in him much of the empiric, and something of the mere political cheap-jack, there was also something far larger and finer. He was above all a patriot, and he was capable, as he showed in his resignation in 1903, of making the heaviest sacrifices in what he imagined to be the cause of his country.

I have never been able to share or sympathise with Mr. Chamberlain's vision of the British Empire; the very thought of it has always filled me, in fact, with severe depression. It was a sort of Prussian pie without the crust—and half-baked at that: there was to be restriction, canalisation, and stereotyping by diplomacy and consent instead of by militarism and force. England was to be the workshop of the Empire, with some pleasant rooms over it; the Dominions were to be granaries, lumber-warehouses, bacon-factories, mines, vineyards, and wool-farms; the Crown Colonies were to supply sugar and spice and all things nice. It was a thoroughly Prussian conception, not because it involved cruelty—which, after all, was only incidental to Prussianism—but because it was at war with the idea of the natural growth of an immature community towards full nationhood, with distinctive arts, tastes, and schemes of life generally. In all his visionary materialism I think Mr. Chamberlain was most disastrously wrong; it was his whole notion of Imperial relations, and not his incidental disrespect for the principles of Free Trade, that seemed to me most inconsistent with his original Liberalism. But it is questionable whether he was ever a true Liberal; certainly, he

was never a lover of freedom. His Birmingham mayoralty, excellent in its results, was more or less an amiable dictatorship; and Mr. Russell, in his *Portraits of the Seventies*, has told us that Gladstone once likened him to Gambetta, as *un homme autoritaire*. His likeness to Mr. Lloyd George has often been remarked; in nothing is it more apparent than in this, that both have such small respect for individual liberty, and both would much rather reform the people than let the people do their own reforming. But a democrat Mr. Chamberlain always remained, even when he was in closest co-operation with the Tory leaders. He never lost his first interest in the betterment of the working classes; the sight of preventible misery he hated; and the whole bent of his mind was humanitarian. But, just as a Liberal is not always a democrat, so a democrat is by no means always a Liberal. The idea of Liberalism is giving men freedom to work out their own salvation, with the minimum of State interference with individual liberty; and in certain cases this may imply extreme callousness to private misfortune, as well as considerable favouritism to the top dog. The democratic idea is only concerned with freedom so long as it is likely to operate for equality; of the three items in the Republican motto it lays least stress on liberty, and most on equality and fraternity. Mr. Chamberlain was more inclined to underline fraternity than the other two. He wanted all Englishmen to be brothers, but most of them were to be very little brothers.

To such a man, bringing his own atmosphere to the Colonial Office, and attacking the problems there in his own hastily decisive way, the case of the Boer Republics must have seemed very feeble. Here they were, straddling in a spirit of sluttish obstructiveness across the path of orderly British development; and so long as they remained all our plans for the good

of a whole continent were liable to unsettlement. All such cases are arguable to some degree. If Ahab had had the good luck of David we might have heard less about his wickedness and more about his broad and enlightened statesmanship, as well as about the sheer unprogressiveness of Naboth. Let us remember how the world rang with praises of Ahab after his good luck in 1870, before we insist too strongly on the sacredness of every petty freehold. Mr. Chamberlain, at any rate, had no difficulty in making up his mind, and when he made up his mind he was quite sure (for the time being, at any rate) that he had made it up aright. "Consistency is not so important," he once said; "the main point is that we should be always right." He persuaded himself that he was always right by resolutely excluding every other possibility. Except for purposes of invective or banter, he refused to see any other side of a question than that which he had chosen. He thought in reason-tight compartments, approaching every matter in turn as if it were an isolated thing. By so doing he economised energy, and was able to communicate his own vigour, without appreciable loss, to his subordinates and instruments. But this driving force was achieved at the cost of much; he was the first great exemplar of the modern notion that decision and dexterity in separate matters compensate for the lack of an inspiring philosophy. Where you want to go is a secondary matter; the main things are a very fast car and an ability to turn very sharply round corners, so that if there happens to be a block in front you can dodge up a scarcely noticed alley on the left.

It was, indeed, the true tragedy of Mr. Chamberlain's career that, while he had the fastest of cars, he did not possess a reliable route-map, and his road in political life was always chosen by instinct, hearsay, and the like. He turned up any likely-looking road,

and then went full speed ahead until brought to a stop. Now, Mr. Gladstone had a map, and so had Mr. Balfour. But Mr. Gladstone's was rejected because it was too old-fashioned, and gave no account of the more modern routes and places, and Mr. Balfour's had the disadvantage that every road led back to the starting-place. To drop parable, the whole story of the last twenty years of the nineteenth century might have been different if Mr. Chamberlain could have co-operated with Mr. Gladstone; that he could not was as much Mr. Gladstone's defect as his own. The whole story of the first twenty years of the twentieth century might have been different if he could have found in Mr. Balfour's qualities the full complement of his own; that also was Mr. Chamberlain's misfortune rather than his fault. There was a temperamental bar in the first case, and an intellectual bar in the second. Mr. Gladstone did not want to move in Mr. Chamberlain's way and at Mr. Chamberlain's pace. Mr. Balfour was firmly convinced of the foolishness of moving at all, except in the manner known as marking time. Thus the splendid energy and courage of Mr. Chamberlain, which might have been extraordinarily fruitful if allied with a more steadfast hold of political principle, were largely spent in comparative futility. The greatness that he achieved —and he was, after all, a very great man—was due rather to the soundness of his instincts and sympathies than to the sureness of his intellectual processes; if he thought wrong, he had often a way of guessing right. Some men are too much of the doctrinaire, and some too little. Joseph Chamberlain was too little.

CHAPTER XIII

OSCAR WILDE

ONE evening in the early summer of 1895 the newsboys were shouting "All the winners." Yet one line on their placards gave the lie to that eternal cry which mocks the death of great men and the fall of great empires. It referred to the sentence which, in due time, was to give birth to the one indisputably genuine and serious thing Oscar Wilde wrote, the *Ballad of Reading Gaol*.

Oscar Wilde was one of the losers ; in the long list of men of genius who have paid just forfeit it is not easy to think of a more tragic figure. Others had fallen from greater heights ; none had gone more friendlessly to a lower perdition. For it was the very element of his tragedy that it could not be shared or alleviated ; on the path he had henceforth to tread there could be no comrade ; his offence was one at which charity itself stood embarrassed, and compassion felt the fear of compromise. On this very evening theatres were full of people chuckling over jests of almost wicked brilliance which he had turned and re-turned, polished and sharpened, with the laborious care of a lapidary, for he worked at trifles with tremendous earnestness, and the ease of the style was the reward of immense pains on the part of the writer. One of his comedies was being actually played in London while the drama of his trial was proceeding on another stage. Business is business,

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and managers with money at stake did not care to withdraw immediately good money-drawing pieces. But they made a due *amende* to outraged decency. They played Wilde's play, but they struck his name out of the bill. The action might be mean. But it was understandable. There was no harm in the play, but the name could then hardly be pronounced without offence.

Even at this distance, when there can be pity without suspicion of condonation, it is not easy to discuss Wilde as we should any other author whose influence was considerable in his day and generation. Yet those who would pass by this ill-starred man of genius because of the event which interrupted his career as a writer would be acting almost as foolishly as the absurd people (mostly Germans) who on the same account yield him a perverse and irrational homage. Wilde was not only important in himself ; he was still more important as the representative of a mood yet to some extent with us, but extraordinarily prevalent in the latter years of the nineteenth century. Of this mood he was in letters the only able English representative. There were many men who thought his thoughts, and even attempted to write his style. But they are now forgotten except by the curious ; Wilde alone survives. This mood was in certain aspects one of honesty, in others one of cowardice ; it was never a mood of health. The honesty was negative ; it took the form of protest against certain easy and conventional shams. The cowardice was positive ; it took the form of fearing to stand in competition with great realities. People like Wilde had sense to detect, and virility to denounce, certain poor players of old tricks ; they had not the courage to be themselves quite genuine people ; they contented themselves on the whole with doing newer tricks. There was no harm in this in itself. But they had also much conceit, and so, to

impress the public with a due sense of their importance, they insisted that the tricks of which they were easily capable were really the only tricks worth doing. Their art was Art itself, and the only Art.

Now it takes all sorts to make any kind of world, and there is no sense in expecting an artist whose gift is miniature painting to follow Paul Veronese. By all means let him sneer at any dull fool who does follow Paul Veronese. But we shall do well to take very little notice of him when he says that no picture should be painted on anything larger than six square inches of ivory. A Japanese *netsuke* is a pleasing object ; so is Ely Cathedral. Let the *netsuke* carver have his due credit. But if he began to talk as if Ely Cathedral were a pretentious vulgarity, which he himself could easily have built if (in Johnson's phrase) he had " abandoned his mind to it," we should quickly tell him to mind his own business. But this was very much the pose of Wilde and his school. They were right in depreciating uninspired imitators of great men. They were wrong in depreciating all greatness which could not be measured by their own small tapes. They were especially wrong in declaring that " popular art is bad art," and setting up their own literary jade-work, often graceful and pleasant enough in its own way, as the sole standard of taste. " Only the great masters of style," said Oscar Wilde once, " ever succeeded in being obscure." If that were literally true he himself, though self-called a " lord of language," would have to be denied the title of stylist, for though he sometimes showed confusion of thought, and very often said things so silly that one sometimes looks a second time to see whether they are really meant, he was on the whole quite extraordinarily lucid. His words, however, though nonsensical in their literal effect, do mean something and reveal something. Every

very great writer is obscure in the sense that he does somehow contrive to offer a choice to his reader ; thus everybody has his own particular view of *Hamlet*, and of many individual passages in *Hamlet*, though the actual obscurities are very few. But Shakespeare never meant *Hamlet* to be a mystery to anybody ; he meant it simply to be a good play, and one understandable to every soul in the theatre. Shakespeare was thinking of his audience as something that was doing him a compliment in coming to hear his play. Wilde thought of his audience as something that was complimented by his condescension in amusing it. Shakespeare, in short, represented popular and obvious art at its highest, and there is no higher art. Wilde, on the other hand, represented art that was above all things undemocratic. Its assumption was that whatever is popular must be vulgar, that whatever is unusual has at least a presumption of being fine. In such an attitude, whether to life or to art, there is an obvious spiritual danger, and it is not without reason that most people look for corruption where there is excessive refinement. After all, all the most important things men do must be either conventional or monstrous, and he who consciously strives to be much above the common herd in things mattering not very much is fatally prone to be dreadfully below it in things that really do matter. The country or age which can show great art with a simple and obvious motive is generally healthy. The country or age which attaches immense importance to the elaboration of trifles for esoteric appreciation is generally unhealthy. In these matters wherever there is mystery there is evil.

" The two great turning-points of my life were when my father sent me to Oxford, and when society sent me to prison." So says Wilde in *De Profundis*. His father was an oculist in Dublin, a clever, ill-

balanced man of imperious passions and extravagant habits, who firmly believed that alcohol had pulled him through a severe illness, and drank freely on principle. Lady Wilde, poetess and Nationalist pamphleteer, was disappointed with Oscar in much the same way that Betsy Trotwood was disappointed with David Copperfield ; she wanted a daughter, and, since Nature had denied her, she sought consolation by dressing, treating, and talking to her boy as if he had been a girl. It was one of the innumerable oddities of this lady to pretend descent from great people—she believed herself to come from a stem of the same tree which yielded Dante the poet—and the boy was named Oscar because his mother imagined herself she had some sort of connection with the Royal Family of Sweden. It was an unwholesome if brilliant atmosphere in which Oscar Wilde grew up, and the boy early contracted those habits of extravagance which led him, when a poor man in London, to spend hundreds a year in the matter of cabs alone. Neither at school nor at Oxford did he take any interest in sport, but he was devoted to his blue and white china, his antiques, and his wall-papers. This æstheticism earned him the resentment of some robust fellow-undergraduates, and he was once tied up in a rope and dragged to the top of a hill ; when released he merely flicked the dust off his clothes and remarked, " Yes, the view is really very charming." Perhaps the most important event of his Oxford life was the winning of the Newdigate prize. His success decided him to take up literature as a profession. And in order to make a short cut into literature he placed himself at the head of the æsthetes, clean-shaven and long-haired, in " a velvet coat, knee-breeches, a loose shirt with a turn-down collar, and a floating tie of some unusual shade fastened in a La Vallière knot," carrying in his hand " a lily or a sunflower which he used to

contemplate with an expression of the greatest admiration."

The notoriety naturally following on this masquerade had its advantages in the way of dinner invitations, lecture engagements, and, to some extent, the smiles of publishers. But Wilde earned little and had to spend a good deal in maintaining his position; and, despite a lecturing venture in America, it was not until his marriage with Miss Constance Lloyd in 1884 that he settled down to anything like satisfactory employment. For such a man the post of editor of the *Woman's World* could hardly be amusing, and Wilde retained the bitterest recollections of his connection with journalism. "In centuries before ours," he once wrote, "the public nailed the ears of journalists to the pump. That was quite hideous. In this century journalists have nailed their own ears to the key-hole. That is much worse." It was not, in fact, until the Nineties had well opened that Wilde began to make good and to relieve the strain on his wife's little fortune which his extravagant habits caused. *Dorian Gray*, published in 1891, was a doubtful artistic success and a quite undoubtful commercial failure. But at the beginning of the next year *Lady Windermere's Fan* at once took the fancy of London. Wilde had made several attempts to conquer the stage, but partly inexperience and partly obstinacy had so far stood in his way. "I hold," he said, "that the stage is to a play no more than a picture-frame is to a painting." But a frame can generally be had to accommodate any picture, and no stage could properly accommodate some plays. Wilde once argued for the performance of plays by puppets. "They have many advantages. They never argue. They have no crude views about art. They have no private lives. We are never bored by accounts of their virtues, or bored by recitals of their vices; and when they are out of an engagement

they never do good in public or save people from drowning. . . . They recognise the presiding intellect of the dramatist, and have never been known to ask for their parts to be written up." A man holding such views—which are really only a mad extension of a sane position—was likely to remain for long unacted. But when he left behind him the intricacies of five-act tragedy, and found his true *métier* in comedy, his success was instantaneous.

And it was well deserved. The Wilde comedies " date " a good deal. They are rather monotonous in their brilliancy. There is too much of a particular trick ; one is always expecting the unexpected. The characters sit round to exchange epigrams rather too much like the Moore and Burgess Minstrels used to sit round to exchange conundrums, with a " Mr. Johnson " at one corner and a Mr. Somebody-else at the other. The epigrams themselves are often forced and sometimes merely foolish. There is little characterisation ; all Wilde's men are wits or the butts of wits, and his women, broadly speaking, are unimportant. But when all deductions are made his comedies are among the best in the language. *Lady Windermere's Fan* was followed a year later by *A Woman of No Importance*, and in 1895 by *An Ideal Husband* and—the best of the series—*The Importance of Being Earnest*. From circumstances of considerable embarrassment Wilde suddenly mounted to high prosperity. But the change was all for the worse. With his tendencies to physical self-indulgence, a plentiful supply of ready money tempted him to fatal excess in eating and drinking, and he was a man to whom exercise of any kind was repellent. On his unsound mental constitution the brilliance of his position and prospects had an equally unfortunate effect. He grew fat and bloated in person and absurdly inflated in conceit. His features, once handsome with the comeliness of some image on a

classic coin, were now puffed and of impure outline, and the richness of dress which he affected degenerated into a greasy luxuriousness. He had only three years of prosperity, but those were enough to show that he had neither the mind nor the physical constitution to bear success. Even before the tragedy which cut short his working life his friends had begun to fall away, and it was pretty clear that his career as a creative artist was likely to be limited.

Of the last chapters of his unhappy history nothing can usefully be said. The expiation was no less horrible than the sin; his last piteous work may suggest that there was final penitence and rest. But there was so much of the artificial in Wilde that it was never quite safe to infer when he was genuine and when histrionic. Almost his whole life had been spent in posing. Yet his mind was naturally precise and logical; with proper discipline it would have been of quite masculine strength. "There is something tragic," he once said, "about the enormous number of young men there are in England at the present moment who start life with perfect profiles, and end by adopting some useful profession." He would have been better with a useful profession. To adapt his own words, there is something tragic about the enormous number of young men there are in England at any given moment who start life with some Greek and Latin, a knack of good form and social dexterity, a more than competent physique, enough money to enable them to spend a few of their best years in rather laborious idleness, and no notion of giving the world a full equivalent of what they propose to take out of it. The number of young women in much the same case is scarcely less disquieting. The real moral of Wilde's tragedy is not the obvious one. It is rather that even highly gifted people should have some honest trade to begin with, and leave "art" and "literature" (apart from such

branches as are really trades and handicrafts) until, mayhap, they find themselves positively impelled thereto. If that were the rule the world would be poorer by some millions of bad pictures and unpleasant novels, but indefinitely richer in human cleanliness and honesty.

CHAPTER XIV

SIR WILLIAM HARCOURT

THOSE who seek the legislative monument of Sir William Harcourt must examine the Finance Act of 1894, which put real estate on the same footing as personal in the matter of death duties. A facetious writer once observed that the principle of graduation so beautifully exemplified in this measure must have been suggested to Sir William by a study of his own name, which is an excellent example of ascending values. William and George are but degrees in the ordinary, but with Venables we definitely reach the higher level; Vernon is still better, and Harcourt fitly crowns the whole. The full name, William George Granville Venables Vernon Harcourt, is the perfection of a *crescendo*; it at once soothes and stirs like the grand vibrations of organ music; it has the majestic swell and rhythm of the peaceful ocean.

It is no discredit to Sir William Harcourt that he failed to live fully up to the more stately standards of this pageant of nomenclature. Sometimes he was little more than William or George; more often he got as far as Granville and Venables; it was only occasionally that he matched the full kingliness of all twelve syllables. His career, like his name, was a mixture of the great, the almost great, and the almost ordinary. But while in the name these elements were perfectly blended, the career somehow lacked balance and unity. Sir William arrived early at eminence; he was during many years a nearly first-class figure

in English politics; he had gifts, sedulously cultivated, of a quite splendid type; he was acute, clear-headed, wary, indefatigable; he liked the game of politics and knew every move in it; his judgment of men and things was shrewd; he was witty as a Sheridan comedy; he commanded a capital debating style and a manner of platform speaking which, while not of the highest, was in its way exceedingly effective. Moreover, he had no inconvenient moral impedimenta. Mr. Labouchere described him (approvingly) as a "squeezable Christian," and therefore fitter for a Party leader than a "conscientious atheist" like Mr. John Morley. So well endowed and so little handicapped, he should have been sure of the best that politics could give. Yet the latter part of his life was embittered by the sense of failure, and failure of a kind which has no compensations. For Sir William Harcourt was not one of those happily constituted people who can enjoy the sunshine as well as another, and yet get a quiet pleasure out of a rainy day. He attached excessive importance to the very things that just eluded him, and was complicatedly cross because they did elude him—cross with circumstances, cross with people who played him false at the critical moment, and cross with himself for not being superior to being cross with them. For though he did not lack magnanimity, and though in the long run he brought himself to act generously towards more than one who had helped to frustrate his natural ambition, he could not avoid being hurt and showing that he was hurt.

"You have a Chancellor in your family, and a Lord Lieutenant of Ireland," said John Morley to him, in the year 1894, "and you'd like to have a Prime Minister in your family, and no earthly blame to you." True, it was no great thing to be Liberal Prime Minister just then. The estate was terribly encumbered, and the brokers' men were already at

the door. That Sir William knew as well as any. But still, if one must be a " transient and embarrassed phantom," it was just a little better to be a phantom in a shooting jacket than a phantom in livery. To don the Primrose livery, especially, was gall to the proud Plantagenet. He was of very ancient English and French family, while Lord Rosebery sprang (many years ago, it is true) from a mere Presbyterian minister ; he had been in Liberal politics when Lord Rosebery was in the nursery ; he had loyally supported Mr. Gladstone through thick and thin ; he had never spared himself in the House of Commons or on the platform ; he was conscious of qualifications with which the Scottish nobleman, with all his graces, could not vie ; and he had every reason to calculate on the support of the Radical wing of the party, which he had served faithfully, if not always with conviction. Small wonder that Sir William Harcourt was bitter when with one accord the men in the inner councils of Liberalism, the new men as well as the old, the Asquiths and Aclands, as well as the Morleys and Spencers, turned against him, and towards Lord Rosebery.

We know now that the choice, if the best possible, was still unfortunate. But in politics the things which seem most obviously unreasonable are precisely the things which are done for the most serious reasons, and there were grave reasons indeed against a Harcourt Premiership. Sir William was endowed with a temperament which sometimes made it hard for men to work with him, and might well have made it impossible for men to work under him. He was at once too difficult and too easy. He had a fatal knack of rousing antagonism, and lacked the force or inclination to crush antagonism when it arose. He sometimes used language of the kind that stirs up rebellion in men of the most temperate blood, and, while sensitive himself, took little thought

of the feeling of others. But, though he thoughtlessly made enemies, he was far too kindly and warm-hearted a man to convert them into victims. Thus he had to meet a most perilous combination—strong hostility and no serious fear. It would have been well with him if he could have invoked the argument of terror ; it would have been better if he could have led men in silken bonds. But he could not dominate, and he could not manage. The lack of tact and the lack of resolution were both well illustrated over the matter of the Rosebery Premiership. Sir William Harcourt stood out just enough to make the position for Lord Rosebery difficult, and gave way just enough to make his own position impossible. Then he fumed in private over the arrangements in which he had publicly concurred, and, apart from his manful work in his own department, played the part of a sulking Achilles. There were, of course, many excuses. He was getting old. He had no great enthusiasm for Home Rule, or, indeed, for anything. He was, like the rest of the Liberal leaders, bitterly disappointed by the size of the majority of 1892, and incensed by the futility of the task it had in hand ; " he missed," says Lord Morley, " old stable companions, and did not take to all the new " ; and altogether he might well be oppressed by a sense of anachronism. For he was a politician of the old school, and the Nineties were perpetually reminding him that the old school was going, and almost gone. More an eighteenth-century man than even a nineteenth, with a taste for elegant scholarship and rotund phrase, he could not feel entirely at home in a House of Commons which included Mr. Keir Hardie, and jibbed at Horace. Indeed, whether quite consciously or not, John Morley had, in the sentence quoted above, put his finger on the trouble. The whole secret of Sir William Harcourt's political life was that he was a belated Whiggish aristocrat trying to realise

himself in unfavourable circumstances. The whole tragedy of Sir William Harcourt's political death was that the circumstances were too strong for the ambition. A whist-player of the gentlemanly old school, he could have borne with philosophy a rubber lost to a conspicuously better player, or one with a conspicuously better hand. But it was bitterness indeed to have the card-room turned into a Bedlam at the exact moment when the last trick looked like being his.

It is no longer easy to understand the kind of man Sir William Harcourt was. When we speak now of an opportunist in politics we think of a rather shady person "on the make." When we speak of an idealist in politics we think of a rather foolish and impracticable person, a man of fixed idea, a crank of some kind, who would cheerfully ruin the country, to say nothing of the party to which he gives preference, for the mere satisfaction of advertising his fad. Sir William Harcourt had ideals of his own kind, and even fads. He was a sincere Whig, and a fanatical Erastian. That he was never quite in the inner Gladstonian circle is chiefly attributable to his utter hostility to sacerdotalism. Mr. Gladstone could more easily take to his bosom an unbeliever like Mr. Morley than an eighteenth-century Protestant like Sir William. But though a Ritualistic prelate could always rouse him to fury, and though he could simulate a passion for certain articles in the Newcastle programme concerning which he poked admirable fun in private, Sir William was an eminently "practical politician," and ordinarily his views and convictions were subordinated to something in his eyes vastly more important—the due playing of the political game. Yet we should altogether misunderstand him if we inferred any more affinity to the newer style of professional politician than to the newer style of political crank. He was in one sense abso-

lutely disinterested. He could have been a very rich man had he stayed longer at the Parliamentary Bar. He left it, in fact, for politics, the very moment he could afford to do so, and his fidelity to politics kept him a poor man till almost the end of his life; till, indeed, the death of a nephew left him lord of the rich and pleasant Nuneham domain. Titular honour attracted him no more than money. His knighthood had to be forced on him. When he was appointed Solicitor-General, Mr. Gladstone had to insist on precedent being followed; Sir William wished to escape an honour suitable enough for Mayors and other deserving municipal persons, but scarcely fitting a man of his pedigree. Many years later, much to the delight of his friends in the House of Commons, he refused a much more considerable distinction offered by King Edward. It would have been much to him to be Prime Minister of England; it was nothing to him to be Viscount Harcourt. There was more pride than humility or democratic feeling in this disregard for titles; the pride of Sir William Harcourt was as much a feature of him as his almost gigantic height, his portentous under lip, and his keen enjoyment of his own jokes. A large part of the man was what had long been underground; this parson's son, jests about whose Plantagenet blood seemed rather unmeaning to the uninitiated, was in very fact enormously interested in his genealogy. He could boast of a descent as noble as any in Europe, and though he readily saw the ridiculous side of pride of ancestry in others he could not help attaching an importance to himself as *a* Vernon Harcourt only second to that of being *the* Vernon Harcourt. There is a tale of his wearily repeating, with reference to an absurd person named Knightley, who bored dinner tables with his pedigree, the lines:

> "And Knightley to the listening earth
> Reveals the story of his birth."

But Knightley, had he possessed the necessary powers of repartee, would not have lacked material for effective retort.

Wealth in the real sense being indifferent to him, small honours beneath his consideration, and overpowering enthusiasm for the greater ideals foreign to his nature, what remained as the motive power sufficing to propel the vast bulk of this political galleon through the cross-currents of over thirty years of varied navigation ? The answer would seem to be sheer love of the game of politics. Sir William Harcourt delighted in political warfare almost as an end in itself. It would be unjust, no doubt, to style him a pure opportunist. His course was determined by a sense of loyalty to his party and by a general appreciation of the philosophy of Whiggism. He had his early days of Adullamitism, when he was rather the candid friend than the consistent supporter of his own leaders. But that was in strict accord with the rules of the game. Once he ceased to be a free lance he became the staunchest of partisans. His labours for Liberalism were Herculean. Considered as a mere output of mental energy his career from the early Seventies to the late Nineties was amazing. In every fight he was put forward in the fore-front of the battle, and acquitted himself with astonishing prowess. His sword-play might lack finesse, but its effect no man could deny, least of all that man who had to bear the brunt of his sweeping strokes. He rapidly became one of the greatest of House of Commons debaters, a little given, perhaps, to the declamatory, but never degenerating into mere verbiage or claptrap. On the platform he was, perhaps, less successful : he lacked the gift of emotional appeal, and was wholly wanting in imagination. The common man could laugh heartily at his quips, could cheer his knock-down blows, but his pulses were never stirred, and even his intellect was not

conquered. For somehow Sir William Harcourt, with all his energy and incisiveness, never gave the impression of quite feeling what he said. He always seemed to be engaged rather in a boxing match than a fight—a match in which he was, quite indubitably, out to win, but still a match and not an affair of life-and-death earnestness. Mr. Gladstone, Mr. Morley, and Lord Rosebery each in their way got where Sir William Harcourt could never quite reach. He rather resembled, in fact, that kind of actor who is just a little too stagey for the stage, and is never more theatrical than when his heart is wholly in a part.

But the most stagey actor may have a very real human side, and Sir William Harcourt, so generally credited with a cynical outlook on public affairs, was in his family and social relations the most large-hearted and genuine of men. It would be a mistake, also, to think of him politically as a mere gladiator. It was certainly his misfortune that he had sometimes for party purposes to simulate enthusiasm for causes he had little at heart. On Home Rule and Local Option he privately was a Laodicean (if nothing more positive), attempting in public the ecstasy of a dancing dervish—and, in truth, his figure was ill-adapted to corybantic zeal. But he did really care for good administration, sound finance, and the Whig theory of exterior policy. There was pique in his attitude towards Lord Rosebery, but not pique alone ; he saw what Mr. Gladstone did not see, what the Radicals who gave their voice for a Rosebery Premiership did not see, that Liberal Imperialism would not do ; those who wanted Imperialism wanted the real article, and would go to the right shop for it. Indeed, though the last years of his career were pathetically in contrast with its first promise, they did much to kill the early legend of the pure opportunist. Sir William Harcourt might be cynical as to indifferent matters, and

undoubtedly many things important to others were to him indifferent. But beneath the surface there was, besides much loyalty and generosity to individuals, a larger sincerity, if not to this idea or that, at least to a general conception which might be limited, but was certainly not ignoble.

CHAPTER XV

BISHOP CREIGHTON

WHEN Mandell Creighton was Bishop of London it fell to him to admonish an earnest High Church Vicar, working in the East End, on the subject of incense. The Vicar, pleading hard for his point, appealed to his record as a parish priest. "Dr. Creighton," he said solemnly, "for twenty-five years I have held here a cure of souls, and——" Before he could finish the sentence Creighton cut in with a joke. "Cure them, certainly," he said, "but surely you need not smoke them."

The jest was quite in Creighton's way. It was easy. It was flippant. It was made at the expense of a rather humourless sincerity. It was impolitic; in fact, widely repeated, it caused much offence. But it came into the Bishop's head, and it had to come out. Creighton might possess self-restraint in other ways, but the sacrifice of a good thing was beyond him. Moreover, while ready to make the largest allowances for great errors and even great crimes, he was incapable of respecting what he considered mere faddism in religious matters. He had, it seems certain, religious beliefs of his own, but no religious fancies, and he was contemptuous of fancies in others, still more contemptuous of fancies that were rather more than fancies. The priest in the present case was clearly a fool; who but a fool would remain a priest in Bethnal Green for twenty-five years? Why not, then, tell him so, if it could be done with due urbanity

and wit? It was the sort of thing Creighton would have said as an undergraduate at Merton, and to a rather unusual degree he retained the undergraduate mind throughout life. In full maturity both his earnestness and his flippancy were less those of manhood than of very intelligent youth; at sixty he was mentally as fresh as at twenty, and (it may perhaps be said) as foppish. The foppishness was the more real because it was unconscious, like the undergraduate's; Creighton disclaimed "superiority" in himself, and strongly resented it in others, but he never lost that combined simper and swagger of the mind which we are so often persuaded to call Oxford. There could have been no greater contrast to Temple. Temple said what he had to say, and cared very little what people thought as to the thing said or the manner of its saying. Creighton had always some of the eagerness and wistfulness of the clever young man who feels it incumbent on him to sparkle, and is troubled with just a doubt whether he has quite "come off." His paradoxes are often strongly reminiscent of Oscar Wilde's; they are not so witty, but have much the same superficial smartness, essential untruth, and light contempt of average humanity. Wilde would have given a more dexterous turn to "No people do so much harm as those who go about doing good," but the spirit of the thing is quite his, and he might actually have described an Extension lecture as "a mission to enlightened greengrocers." This, of course, was only one side of Creighton's character; in other moods he said many wise things, and did things still more wise. Whether he was a fundamentally wise man is another question. Wise men have a habit of ceasing to be clever, and especially of ceasing to be exceptionally educated. Creighton could not help being always a wit and always a don. As a Christian he was always ready to admit the equality of men before God. He

even erred on the side of minimising the moral differences between man and man, as in that very unphilosophical generalisation that "all are so infinitely far from the perfection of God that little differences do not matter," which is equivalent to saying that the light of a lamp is so infinitely less than the light of the sun that it does not matter whether we have a smoky lamp or not. In this way, as a Christian, Creighton was fond of showing his indifference to externals. But as an Oxford scholar he did incline to think too much of certain small things and too little of certain big things.

There were no two subjects on which he was more prone to witty depreciation than the clerical mind and the national mind. Yet he was himself very English, and very Church-of-English. Only in England would such a man find himself in holy orders; only in England, especially, would such a man find himself a Bishop. The whole tone of his mind was secular and humanist; on indifferent things he spoke as an unembarrassed pagan; when, like an ecclesiastical Wegg, he "dropped" into theology, the effect was a little awkward. There was no suspicion of insincerity in Creighton talking about "keeping open the way to Jesus," and "growing nearer to God," but there was (to some at least) a sense of incongruity. It gave the sort of shock one would feel if Mr. Chesterton went out dressed like the Rev. R. J. Campbell, or if Mr. Massingham went to a fancy dress ball in a colourable imitation of a Field-Marshal's uniform.

One was prepared for everything moral, kindly, and sensible from Creighton. But to find this very clever man—"for sheer cleverness Creighton beats any man I know," said Temple once—really did regard himself first and foremost as a "pastor of souls," and was so despite the neat epigrams, the equally neat gold cigarette case, and the social

àplomb, was not a little staggering. His countrymen, stupid as Creighton always loved to represent them, might at least partially understand him. It is safe to say no intelligent Italian or Frenchman would have done so. Such a foreigner would understand well enough a great Prince of the Church, who might or might not be a Christian. He would understand a poor saint. He would understand a humanist unbeliever full of noble sentiment. What he would hardly understand was how a man so very " broad " managed to confine himself in a " distinct branch of the Catholic Church." Still less would he be able to comprehend how a scholar with a life-long ambition to write a great historical work should be the victim, in his own words, of a " conspiracy to prevent him from doing so." But to the English, and also to Creighton, who loved to satirise the English, it seemed not unnatural that a man who cared little about any points of ritual should be constantly adjudicating between the Kensitites on the one hand and the extreme High Churchmen on the other, or that a man eminently qualified to write great history in which he was intensely interested should be set to compose small squabbles in which he was not interested at all.

Why Creighton took orders was much of a mystery to his set at Merton. The whole intellectual tendency of the day was towards agnosticism, and Creighton was very intellectual indeed. But, though Creighton had little sympathy with " external and mechanical orthodoxy," and, in the words of his eulogist, " did not wear his spiritual heart on his sleeve," but " reverted to paradox to conceal differences on which he did not care to insist," he seems to have remained a convinced Churchman, and indeed considerably more of a High and less of a Broad Churchman than he afterwards became. His ambition to be a clergyman dated from early boyhood ; but it would probably

not be unjust to suggest that he was first attracted to the Church less by a spiritual urging than by the thought that the clerical career would afford him an opportunity for study and literary work. Creighton's love for things of the mind was more Scottish than English ; his family was a Scottish family, though settled in Cumberland ; his father, trained as a joiner, had a furnishing and decorating business ; on his mother's side he came of yeoman farmer stock. Healthy but short-sighted, the lad had no recreation but taking long walks—a habit which persisted and developed in later life (he once walked from Oxford to Durham in three days)—and his naturally studious bent was accentuated by this aloofness from the sports of his companions. The severity of the born student, however, was softened from a very early age by the taste of the born æsthete ; Creighton's rooms at Oxford, the moment he got a little money, were beautifully set out with choice little pieces of old furniture, blue and white china, and flowers arranged on the most correct principles of the newest school of taste. After his marriage with Miss Louise von Glehn (who first attracted him by her youth, her yellow sash, and her interest in his lectures) he removed from his pleasant rooms to a house in Oxford equally charming in its way, and the centre of much quiet intellectual junketing. But, though he delighted in Oxford, he began, as years went on, to think of University as " like living in a house with the workmen always about," and the pressure of his tutorial duties made him long for some less arduous environment in which to carry out his design of a History of the Papacy. An opportunity presented itself at the end of 1874. The richest and oldest living within the gift of Merton, that of Embleton, forty miles north of Newcastle, became vacant ; Creighton made it known that he would be willing to accept, and the offer was made him. At Embleton, lying on

a desolate part of the Northumbrian coast, Creighton made himself comfortable in the old fortified vicarage which used to afford shelter to the parishioners and their cattle during Scottish moss-trooper raids; and here, in the intervals of attending to not too arduous parish duties, he brought out the first two volumes of his history. The work at once placed him in the front rank of serious writers of the day; and the praise lavished on it was not undeserved. For though the effort to be impartial where impartiality is impossible gave coldness to the narrative, these volumes, as well as those which succeeded, showed great learning, a brilliant power of analysis and exposition, and a rare faculty of imaginative sympathy. It is a curious testimony to Creighton's fairness to find Lord Acton at a later date accusing him of too much tenderness for certain Popes, while Protestants were complaining that Luther was treated with an undue lack of reverence.

By this time parochial duties, increasing with the years, began to irk Creighton as much as the pressure of his tutorial duties had done, and he was anxious for a change. In 1884 he accepted the offer of the appointment of Professor of Ecclesiastical History at Cambridge; shortly after he took from Mr. Gladstone a Canonry at Worcester; and in 1890 Lord Salisbury offered him the vacant See of Peterborough. Nearly ten years before he had been asked if he would like to be a Bishop. "No, I should not," he replied, "but if I were offered a Bishopric I should no doubt take it, because I have got into the habit of doing what is asked of me." He was anxious to get on with his history; to become a Bishop meant the definite sacrifice of further literary ambitions. But though he thought it "a terrible nuisance," and his "natural self" abhorred it, and he considered himself "an object of compassion," it is probable that the promotion was not quite so unpleasant as he represented it to many friends and probably himself believed it to

be. For both his worldly and other-worldly sides the appointment had some compensations. He really did enjoy society, and he really did feel (singular as it might seem in a man of his temperament) his mission as a Christian priest. The sense was not strong enough to make him seek great activities, but it was strong enough to make him feel it an act of cowardice and self-indulgence to refuse a call when it came. But it was in the nature of the man to mix up almost comically his various feelings. At one time we find him lamenting that living in a Palace will be bad for his children, at another he speaks of regarding his individual life as simply an opportunity of offering himself to God, and then we have the following very characteristic remark : " A good lady said to me the other day, ' After all, men are more interesting than books.' Doubtless this is true, but you can choose your own books, and you must take your men as you find them." " My peace of mind," he said in the same letter, " is gone ; my books will be shut up ; my mind will go to seed ; I shall utter nothing but platitudes for the rest of my life, and everybody will write letters in the newspapers about my iniquities." The picture of such a man hesitating between a certain set of tastes and the call of conscience is perhaps best illustrated in a story which may or may not be new. One of Creighton's children was asked what he was going to do. The reply was, " Father is still praying for guidance, but mother is packing our boxes."

Whatever his real qualms, they seem to have been excessive. Once settled down to his new work, Creighton quite enjoyed himself at Peterborough, and certainly, by all reasonable standards of episcopal efficiency, was a success. But his translation to London in 1896 was the occasion of more complaints in the same key. London was " inhuman " ; it required all his efforts to remain human in such a spot. There were not so many human beings in

London as in Peterborough. He was in " the very centre of all that was worldly." He was " exposed to the most deteriorating influences." It was " a great nuisance " that he never saw anybody intimately. " Every ass was at liberty to bray in his study." He never seemed to be free from interviewing candidates for ordination. There was no one to be " kind " to him. But as he became more used to the new conditions the complaints became less frequent. He felt himself making some impression, not only on his vast work, but on the vast town. The newspapers recognised the richness of his personality. The gossips retailed his good things. He began to feel at home, and within a year of his promotion we find him confessing that London is " immensely interesting " with its " abundant life," which, however, " raises the question—Where is it going ? "

If he found London bewildering as well as interesting, London—or that fraction that troubled about such matters—was also a little puzzled, as well as interested, in him. There was, indeed, something of the Sphinx about this long, gaunt figure, with the bearded, spectacled face, harsh in feature as only northern English faces can be, intrinsically stern, but generally lightened by a smile half genial and half quizzical. Rapidly becoming one of the best-known of public men, he was never quite understood. The man killed himself by hard work ; a constitution good enough to have taken him to fourscore was worn out at less than sixty by too conscientious efforts to keep pace with the enormous demands made on his energies. His sermons and addresses breathed much of the purest spirit of Christian faith, as well as the very soul of Christian charity. Yet he who laboured so faithfully, and preached so admirably, often talked nonsense—sometimes good nonsense and sometimes bad—and showed a quality (some called it playfulness and others flippancy) which perturbed equally the

faithful and the infidel. For orthodox people could not understand this levity in a serious man, and unorthodox people seemed to think that a man of his mentality and temperament had no right to be orthodox. There was in his very toleration something insulting to enthusiasts. To people who held strong views on some question he felt to be trivial he could not emit judicious platitudes; his judgment was generally barbed with a wit that rankled with both sides. One reference to incense has already been quoted; another was, "Personally I should say, if they want to make a smell, let them." That sort of thing does not satisfy either those who would kindle the fires of Smithfield or those who would revive the sullen reign of the saints.

The Bishop's attitude was held very generally to denote the kind of breadth which is so easy where there is no strong conviction. But this view was quite erroneous. Creighton's contempt might be too lightly expressed, but it was not lightly entertained. He had a reason for every dislike, and even behind every prejudice. He managed somehow to reconcile the Catholic view of the English Church with pure Erastianism. In one place one finds him ridiculing the notion that truth varies with longitude and latitude; in another he holds that "the general trend of the Church must be regulated by their (the people's) wishes," and that "the Church cannot go too far from the main ideas of the people"—who might conceivably, of course, become polygamists and fire-worshippers fifty years hence. In truth, this great historian often thought as cloudily and locally as a country curate, and, far more than he was aware, was influenced by the insularity he so often derided. Where he did not take the English view he took the German, being soaked, like most Victorians, in Teutonism; and he really objected to "religious observances of an exotic kind" less because they were exotic than because they were Latin.

" The Church of Rome," he said once, " is the Church of decadent peoples." On another occasion he observed that the Roman communion is " a small body in England, which stands in no relation to the religious life of the nation. . . . To join that Church is simply to stand on one side and cut yourself off from your part in striving to do your duty for the religious future of your country." I am not concerned in the sectarian question involved ; I only quote the passages to show that Creighton, with all his learning and cleverness, could talk solemn nonsense as well as the lighter kind. Yet he would have been quick to see the logical lapse of some old barbarian who condemned Christianity as the religion of under-sized people, or of the Roman governor under Nero who sent saints to the lions because this new faith of " Chrestus " stood in no relation to the religious life of a polytheistic Empire, so that for a Roman citizen to join it was to " cut himself off from his past in striving to do his duty for the religious future of his country."

The truth is, of course, that Creighton, disliking Rome and despising the " dying nations " in her communion, wished to say something nasty without too much trouble—a natural and perhaps commendable desire. The Ulster man, when he wants to gratify it, says simply, " To Hell with the Pope " ; Creighton, instead of rising to bad language, sank to bad argument, and gave the weight of his personality to the once popular doctrine that a creed is to be honoured in proportion to the wealth and material prosperity of its professors. Yet on all indifferent matters he would have been the first to hold that truth is truth if only one man (and he a scrofulous cripple) believes it, and error error, even though approved by everybody as tall as Creighton and endowed with the particular code of good manners which he approved.

CHAPTER XVI

JOHN MORLEY

I REMEMBER hearing John Morley—it was then impossible to conceive of him as containing the germ of John Viscount Morley—addressing one of the many "flowing tide" meetings which were among the chief public events of the early Nineties. I can recall nothing of the speech, except that it was about the Irish question; Mr. Morley had just been over to Ireland, and some officious policeman had struck him with a baton, or something of that sort—a proceeding which had naturally annoyed him, and imparted some acerbity to his remarks. But, of course, the speech was less interesting than the speaker. This, then, was the great John Morley, who wrote such beautiful English and spelt "God" with a small "g"—this prim, frock-coated figure, with an indefinable suggestion of the Nonconformist; slight, with the stoop of the student; the face deeply indented with crow's-feet, but in no sense pallid, rather with the kind of unfresh floridity so often seen in the Law Courts; a sort of quiet fatigue pervading the whole, like the American character in Dickens who was "used up considerable"; the eyes at once keen and weary, like all eyes that are the overworked instruments of an active brain depending chiefly on printed matter for its impressions; the forehead well-shaped, but not impressive; everything about him suggestive rather of completeness than mass or power; the whole man compact, agile, highly articulate, trained to the last ounce, notable

John Morley.
1888.

enough, but hardly great. Not naturally an intellectual Hercules, one would say ; rather an example of the fitness that comes of a tidy habit of life and regular work at the bedroom exerciser.

He spoke well, but not very well—nothing like so well as most of the more considerable politicians of the day. He did not lack vehemence ; indeed—perhaps as a consequence of the baton business—he sometimes rasped. Neither was there wanting elevation of phrase, though when he arrived at the rather mechanical peroration I found myself wondering (in my youthful haste) why great men permitted themselves such banalities. But there was a lack of all the greater qualities of oratory, and especially the quality of sympathy ; the speaker had nothing in common with his audience apart from convictions, and those he and they held on a quite different tenure. Years afterwards I found that John Morley was far from an ineffective speaker in his own proper place ; in the House of Commons he could often appeal to the heart as well as to the reason, and when he implored the House of Lords to avoid the " social shock " of the creation of Peers in 1911 his manner had almost as much effect as his matter. In the Upper House, indeed, he was almost a greater success than in the Lower ; his audience liked him, and he greatly liked his audience. " What on earth do you want to go there for ? " Mr. Asquith is said to have remarked when his old colleague suggested that he should sit in the House of Lords. A few years later he might have seen that the philosophical Radical was well placed there.

Among men accustomed to recognise distinction John Morley could hardly fail to be at home, and the longer he represented his Government in the Lords the better he was liked by his fellow-Peers. But a popular speaker he never was, and never could be. It is a gift common to some of the least considerable

as well as some of the greatest men; two of the finest natural orators of the Nineties were members so little regarded as Mr. Sexton and Sir Ellis Ashmead-Bartlett. But, however it may be improved by cultivation, or ennobled by great character or great mentality, it is still a gift, and goes with a type of personality seldom possessed by the really bookish man. It was at this particular meeting that John Morley gave away, for those who had eyes to see, a part of the secret of his comparative failure as a platform speaker. A vulgar, genial local magnate rose to propose a vote of thanks. He allotted a few words of second-hand praise to John Morley as man of letters. He eulogised him as the faithful friend and lieutenant of the noble and revered leader—(cheers)—the Grand Old Man of Liberalism—(loud cheers)—William—(cheers)—Ewart—(frantic cheers)—Gladstone—(prolonged and uproarious cheering). And then he added that Mr. John Morley had one personal claim above all others to the audience's respect. It was not his intellect, though that was brilliant. It was not his party service, though that was great. It was the quality recognised by every working man who knew him as "Honest John."

Mr. Morley winced like a horse stung by a specially noxious gadfly, shifted uneasily in his seat, and then glanced at the fat and complacent speaker with a malignity of which he might have been thought incapable. In that momentary raising of the mask were revealed all the temperamental difficulties of this intellectually convinced democrat in the presence of actual living democracy. If John Morley preserved ever a certain aloofness from the people it was surely in the interests of his faith in the popular cause. In the presence of Peers and scholars he found no difficulty in maintaining the purity of his democratic creed. But real contact with the masses must have been in the long run fatal.

John Morley, indeed, had always rather more than his share of that shrinking pride, that haughty sensitiveness, which so often characterises the Liberal intellectual. The typical Tory of the older time was proud, but in a different way. His hereditary association with " muck and turnips " gave him a certain contact with realities. His family tree was in a sense public property ; his skeletons were hidden in no obscure cupboard, but duly displayed for the edification of the public ; and he had no particular objection to people commenting, and even joking, on certain aspects of his private life. He knew that every disagreement with his wife, every money quarrel with his son, was the gossip of all the ale-houses for miles round. He knew that the labourers called him in private " Old Tom " or something more definitely disrespectful ; so long as they touched their hats in public that did not trouble him. A true aristocracy must always be shameless. But the circle in which John Morley grew up was refined and secretive as no other circle on earth ; the pride of the upper classes is comparatively simple ; the pride of the middle class is as nicely compounded as the melancholy of Jacques. It was this pride, and nothing else, which gave John Morley that reputation of chilly austerity which was really quite foreign to his character. Many things otherwise incomprehensible are plain when we recognise that, while he disliked being called in public " honest John," and cherished a bookish middle-class man's horror of emotion expressed without decorum, he was always a very social sort of person, with a keen enjoyment of all the colour and flavour of things. Lord Morley is perhaps best described as one of those true epicures of life who get the highest it has to offer at something less than the full price. He could be on excellent terms with many sportsmen and society people, because they touched his tastes on points, but he left

them as soon as they manifested tendencies to stubble or covert or dancing-room. He left them thus on no particular principle, not because he was the victim of any Puritanic fanaticism against pleasure, but because he personally took no pleasure in such things : sport and party-going bored him, and his tendency throughout life was to take as much of the smooth and as little of the rough of things as he decently could. And, just as he would go off to his room at a country-house party the moment he had had enough of general society, so while he stuck to his party manfully in periods of storm, he generally found some excuse to leave the business to another when the Liberal ship drifted into the doldrums. But the notion of him as a bloodless philosopher, a sort of atheistic Puritan, a monster of plain living and high thinking, a moral sky-scraper of reinforced abstract, is quite misleading. He speaks of Joseph Chamberlain as having a " genius for friendship." He himself had at least much quiet talent in that direction. Reared in grimy Blackburn, the son of a hard-worked surgeon, his temperament, naturally sunny and sun-loving, led him to early revolt against the " unadulterated milk of the Independent word " on which he was nurtured as a child, and at Oxford we find him musing, in Wesley's room at Lincoln, on the rapidity with which the thoughts and habits of youthful Methodism were vanishing. He had been intended for orders, but the only foundations on which such a career could be honestly based had been destroyed in contact with the destructive criticism of the time ; the teaching profession he rejected after a short and painful experience ; he read for the Bar, but, to his " enduring regret," did not make his way thither : journalism therefore alone remained—a career which may lead anywhere or nowhere, but which, as he afterwards reflected, " quickens a man's life while it lasts," though it may kill him in the end.

Morley was not killed by journalism, was rather made by it. Of his talent for the craft everything requisite has been said ; great as it was, it was perhaps exceeded by his talent for making valuable friendships. It was journalism, for example, that gave him personal touch with the greatest formative influence of his life—John Stuart Mill. The intense admiration of the younger for the older man was natural enough : Mill had a singularly lovable nature. But there was danger in the completeness of Morley's surrender. For Mill was in one sense a highly amiable Satan ; he knew all about the past and present, but had no sense whatever of the future. The whole philosophy of individualism is founded on the presumption that the world would always remain much as it was in the middle of the nineteenth century; Mill does not seem to have had a suspicion of the way in which capital, taking always the line of least resistance in the search for profit, would cease in all its greater manifestations to preserve more than a vestige of its " private " character. All his theories depend on a balance which was destroyed within a very few years, historically speaking, of their promulgation ; the balance, namely, of a mob of unrelated capitalists dealing with a mob of unrelated workers. Morley was a little unfortunate in coming, like a late investor, into the Mill philosophy at the top of the market ; almost immediately the stock began to decline, and it was to some extent the inflexibility of economic opinions formed under these auspices that handicapped him when he arrived at a position of great authority in the Liberal party.

Nevertheless, in the Nineties all things seemed still possible to John Morley. He was, as a real and fervent Home Ruler, Mr. Gladstone's chief dependence ; it was he who bore the main burden of the great Committee fight on the Home Rule Bill. Mr. Gladstone's " rapid splendours " implied an enormous

amount of detail work. " It must be rather heart-breaking for you," said Mr. Asquith to Morley ; " it is brutal to put into words, but, really, if Mr. Gladstone stood more aside we might get on better." " Though putting away this impious thought," comments Morley, " I could not deny that a little dullness and a steady flow of straightforward mediocrity often mean a wonderful saving of Parliamentary time." With Sir William Harcourt, again, he was on excellent terms, while keeping up the most cordial relations with the Rosebery camp. His own work at the Irish Office—his second experience of that bed of torment—was creditable. He had lost a seat, but confirmed a reputation, by his refusal to accept the principle of the eight-hours' day. With the vulgar he was accepted, if without enthusiasm, still with respect, and the Liberal party generally regarded him as one of two possible successors to the leadership. At this time his name was always associated with that of Sir William Harcourt ; they played the two Cæsars to the Augustus of Mr. Gladstone. It is just possible that, if the election of 1892 had yielded a solid Liberal majority of a hundred instead of a strangely composite and insecure majority of nominally forty, the name of John Morley might have graced the august list of British Prime Ministers. An inspiring prospect might have conquered finally the vacillation between politics and literature which endured through almost all Lord Morley's active life. " I wonder whether you are like me," he quotes Mr. Balfour as once saying to him ; " when I'm at work in politics I long to be in literature, and vice versa." " I should think so, indeed," was Morley's reply. No doubt literature was his real business, and he did wrong to desert it at all. Certainly no man of letters will regret the circumstances which led him to withdraw awhile to his study to produce that great human document, glowing with colour

and pregnant with shrewd generalisation, the *Life of Gladstone*. But Morley's attitude in the Nineties need only be compared with that of Disraeli during his long period of waiting, for the difference to be at once manifest between the man of letters who is incidentally and casually a man of action and the man of action who is incidentally and casually a man of letters. Both were engaged in an apparently hopeless struggle. But Disraeli never lost interest in the fight ; he was as resolute and tenacious in the extremes of adversity as he was dashing and resourceful on the verge of victory. Morley's interest, on the other hand, only lasted while he was in office ; when the Rosebery break-up came he ceased to count, and his return to the Cabinet in 1905 was in a character that would have seemed quaint indeed ten years before—that of subordinate to Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman. There was assuredly nothing discreditable to Lord Morley in his failure or disinclination to control an unfortunately developing situation. But his sudden renewal of interest in politics when the once despaired-of Liberal victory and reunion at length arrived, did suggest once again what has already been hinted—that he had perhaps too sure an instinct for the sunny side of the peach.

Lord Morley, in his *Recollections*, quotes Disraeli's comment on one of the first Parliamentary speeches of John Stuart Mill. Mill had not gone far when Disraeli murmured to a neighbour, " Ah, the Finishing Governess." Perhaps something of the character inferred was transmitted from Mill to his disciple. John Morley had the frostiest of spinsterhood's views on the importance of being merely immaculate ; he could bear the reproach of barrenness, but shuddered at that of impropriety. Like many maiden aunts, having no political children of his own to think about, he took an interest in other people's ; we have seen how assiduously he looked after the little Benjamin

of Mr. Gladstone's extreme age. But a maiden aunt is not like a mother, who can never escape from the children. The maiden aunt can always disappear when she likes to Harrogate or Cheltenham, there to flirt decorously with other interests. It was thus with John Morley. While he was always ready to lose his seat rather than depart by one jot or tittle from his principles, he felt no more call to stand by his party than the maiden aunt does to stand by the nursery when it has mumps. Liberalism suffered badly from mumps between 1896 and 1903—years during which John Morley was on the whole quite pleasantly engaged. He said what his position demanded during the South African War, but in such sort that his old and dear friend Chamberlain complimented him both on his moderation and his courage in championing an unpopular cause. Meanwhile "C.-B.," with his "methods of barbarism," was hardly safe from mob attack. Yet nobody thinks of Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman as more than a quite ordinary politician of the more honest kind, and everybody thinks of Lord Morley as a stoic hero. For the rest, immersion in the *Life of Gladstone* enabled him to escape without reproach from much active participation in the feuds which rent his party. That great work was finished in 1903, just at the time Liberalism was beginning to revive and reintegrate. No other member of the party had passed through the bad time with less personal discomfort. But the penalty—if penalty it were—had to be paid. In 1896 John Morley was distinctly *Papabile*. In 1903 nobody could conceive him as Pope.

Lord Randolph Churchill once rallied Morley—it might almost be said reproached him—with being one of those men "who believe in the solution of political problems." The impeachment—in which, marvellous to relate, Mr. Balfour was also included—was no doubt justified. It would be quite inexact

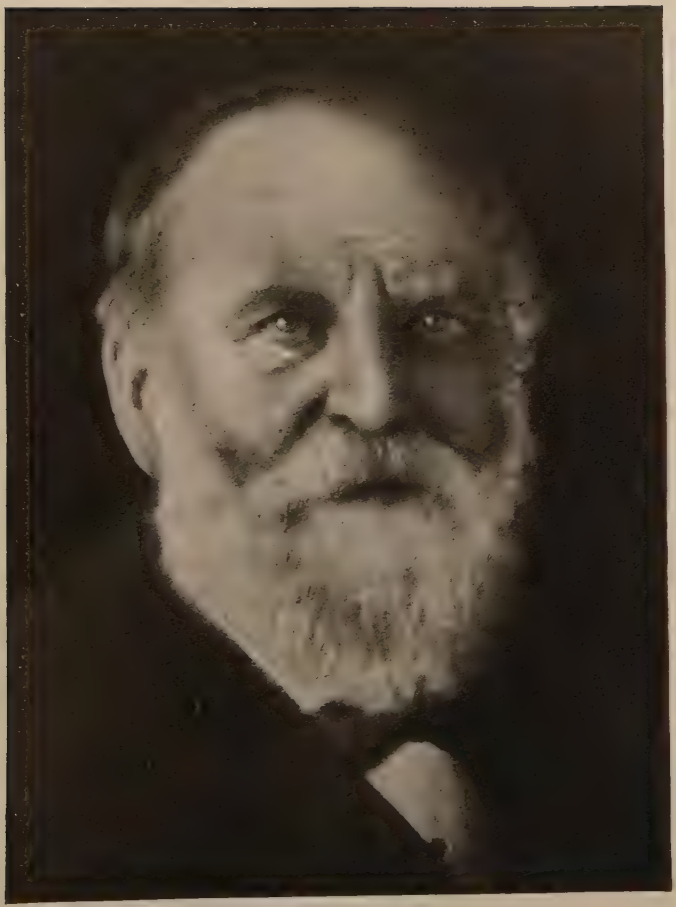
to say that Lord Morley did not take politics seriously ; he took them very seriously indeed. But there are different degrees of belief ; and the faith which rests on a purely intellectual basis (while it may well be more stubborn than any other) calls less imperiously for translation into works than the faith which is held with passion. John Morley, whatever his "belief in the solution of political questions," could bear with perfect philosophy failure to solve them. A Brutus of political virtue, he was perhaps inclined rather to dine with Cæsar than to stab him. But, as an Irish critic said of him, in the course of a glowing eulogy, he also resembled Brutus in his readiness to fall gracefully on his sword when another would go on fighting for victory.

CHAPTER XVII

W. T. STEAD

IT was in the late Nineties that I first met the most talked-of journalist of his day. Though still on the sunny side of fifty, W. T. Stead gave the impression of age. His face, where the grizzling beard did not hide it, was deeply lined, and his movements had that kind of conscious alertness which, in its contrast with the self-possessed and even lazy confidence of youth in its physical competence, is a sure indication of advancing years. He was given to loose home-spuns, which made his figure appear rather more clumsy than it really was. Nothing in his negligence of dress, however, suggested the Bohemian ; he might easily have passed, at first glance, for a country tradesman of the less pompous kind, say, a corn-and-seed merchant in a substantial way.

The eyes, however, at once attracted attention. They were neither full nor beautiful, and one might have known the man all his life without remembering their precise colour ; doubtless they were of some kind of faded blue or undistinguished grey, like the eyes of millions of other people in northern Europe. The remarkable thing about them was negative. They struck one as the eyes of a man who used them for the special purpose of not seeing. They at once explained what Shakespeare meant when he likened the poet's eye to the lunatic's, and described it as " in a fine frenzy rolling." Stead's eyes did not roll ; they were curiously and brightly still. But they



W. T. STEAD.

did give the idea of " frenzy " as Shakespeare used the word—that is to say, of a subjective and not an objective vision, of a mental excitement, an irritation of the brain, which prevented the owner seeing things as they were. Stead looked not at but through one, just as Mrs. Jellyby looked through her visitors at the coast of Africa five thousand miles away. Whether Stead had at this time any actual malady of vision I know not ; I seem to remember to have read somewhere that he went in his youth in fear of blindness. But he gave instantaneously the impression of a man who either cannot see justly or does not want to—of one, in other words, who is much more interested in his " view " of a thing than in the thing itself. " Views " belong, in fact, largely to the province of myopia. That delicate stylist, Lafcadio Hearn, had to invent a Japan of his own because he never saw the real Japan in which he spent so many years of his life ; and probably much of the astonishing " viewiness " of modern Germany is simply due to the ravages of the German printed character on the German professorial eyesight. Stead was a man of views from the first ; his disaster was that, while he began by possessing views, the views ended by possessing him.

Stead was born in the middle of the nineteenth century at Embleton Manse, Northumberland, " under the shadow," as he put it, " of the grey northern hills." His father was a Congregational minister ; his mother came of a substantial farming stock. It was the case of a large family and small means, and, like his brothers and sisters, Stead was chiefly educated at home ; all his formal schooling was gained in two years at Silcoates, near Wakefield, an establishment for the sons of ministers. He thus grew up without mental discipline of the more severe kind, and his natural disposition inclined him to the desultory. An insatiable curiosity ensured a wide

range of reading ; a quick brain enabled him to grasp as much as he wanted to know ; but he did not form the habit, and there was nobody to form it for him, of systematic and thorough study ; always picking and choosing, he got much knowledge, but little sense of the relation of things. At the same time he was steeped in Nonconformist mysticism. It has often been observed that beliefs in their old age tend to become the extreme opposite of what they started to be, and nineteenth-century Nonconformity, in its loose sentimentality, often contrasted strangely enough with the hard rationalism of an earlier date. Here, as in secular things, Stead picked and chose, followed his own fancies, and used his eyes to see only what he wanted to see. The germ of that spiritual wildness which distinguished him in his later years is to be found in his precocious interest in " revivals " and " conversions." At twelve he felt himself competent to be a guide to his schoolfellows, and he has himself expressed his indebtedness to Silcoates for teaching him " three important things—Christianity, cricket, and democracy." Democracy he then associated partly with Gladstonian Liberalism, and partly with Oliver Cromwell, on whom he composed, while still at school, a warm panegyric which won him a prize of a guinea. Christianity was best illustrated, in his opinion, by the seventeenth-century Puritans, who would assuredly have put him in the pillory for his earliest views, and burned or hanged him for his later addiction to the occult. This early enthusiasm for Cromwell is interesting as an indication of the curious fashion in which ideas developed in the almost unhealthily fertile soil of Stead's brain. He began by worshipping Cromwell as the great Puritan in religion and the great democrat (it is extraordinary how men deceive themselves when they want to) in politics. Then, since everything in Cromwell must be admirable, he began to admire Cromwell as a

great Imperialist, and so insensibly developed, to the horror of his early Quaker employers at Darlington, into an Imperialist himself. It is doubtful whether thought, in the strict sense, had any part in bringing Stead to this or any other conviction. When he had got an idea into his head he could, of course, bring a very active and ingenious brain to the task of developing it. But the idea itself had its source in his taste or his emotions, if it did not arrive by sheer chance. In some respects he might be described as a *gamin* Carlyle. He had much of Carlyle's faculty of smelling men and things, so to speak, across long distances of space and time ; Carlyle was all nose and tongue : his nose enabled him to scent his heroes, and his tongue persuaded incautious people that they were demigods. To be just, they were generally great men. But even Carlyle sometimes went wrong, as the best hound will do ; and Stead, less gifted, went wrong much more often. Lord Morley, while paying high tribute to his " invaluable " qualities as a colleague, hints at " passing embarrassments." Such a man was, in truth, ill adapted to run in harness with people more normally gifted. He had all sorts of superstitions, and it might almost be said that an article of his would depend on his opening his Bible at one page and his Bluebook at another.

Mr. Spender, of the *Westminster Gazette,* recently declared that no man would have repudiated more hotly than Stead the suggestion that journalism was merely a branch of commerce. And in some sense none could more truly say that he regarded his profession as " a vacation abounding in opportunities, but weighted by solemn responsibilities." He had a real passion for what he thought was the right ; he showed fine courage in taking up unpopular causes ; he sacrificed much for great ideals, and still more for small eccentricities. But the man was a most singular combination of the business man and the

mystic. Those who worked with him had much the same sort of shock we feel in reading the speeches of seventeenth-century Puritan statesmen, who (to quote Macaulay) talked in Committee of Ways and Means about seeking the Lord. He might be led to consider a technical problem through reading the Book of Proverbs, or going to a spiritualistic séance. But to the problem itself he brought the coldest common sense. He could engineer a " stunt," as the modern slang goes, as well as the most cynical living professor of that art. Such a " stunt " was the cry that sent Gordon to Khartoum. And even when, as in the " Modern Babylon " articles, his heart was fully engaged, his method was only distinguishable from that of a later date by the superiority of his intelligence and his firm sense of the importance of whatever he happened to say. His egotism was wonderful and almost touching in its *naïveté*. Lord Morley visited him during his imprisonment in Holloway, and found him in a " strangely exalted mood." " As I was taking my exercise this morning in the prison yard," he said, " I asked myself who was the man of most importance now alive? And I could only find one answer—the prisoner in this cell." Yet ten minutes later he might easily have been criticising the " make-up " of a paper, or discussing the financial possibilities of an abridged edition of the classics, with Gibbon in twenty pages, *The Republic* in five, and *Uncle Remus* in fifty.

The beginning of the Nineties saw Stead, with the publication of the *Review of Reviews*, at the very height of his professional prestige. He had, by his " two keels to one " campaign, established a claim on the regard of political realists. He had, by his efforts to interest European monarchs in schemes for the preservation of peace, won the esteem of those idealists who had perhaps suspected him in his capacity of Imperialist. He enjoyed, on the one

hand, the worship of every Nonconformist in England, and, on the other, the friendship of Cecil Rhodes. He exercised, in the sum, an enormous influence on the masses. He could make an author ; he could almost unmake a statesman. There seemed to be little limit to the development of one whom Lord Morley has described as " for a season the most powerful journalist in the island." But just at this period that eccentricity which had always been a large element in his character assumed the proportions of a disease. In 1890 he met a Miss Julia A. Ames, connected with a newspaper in Chicago—" a highly religious woman, a Methodist, very level-headed, and possessing a great amount of common sense." With Miss Ames Stead was strangely impressed, and after her death in America he essayed communication by " automatic writing " with her spirit. In this, he was convinced, he attained success, and in 1893 he started a paper called *Borderland,* chiefly for the purpose of giving the world the " letters of Julia." He devoted much time and money henceforth to spiritualism in its various forms, and " Julia's Bureau " was established " to enable those who had lost their dead, who were sorrowing over friends and relatives, to get into touch with them again."

Inevitably this preoccupation with the occult reacted on Stead's reputation as a thinker on more mundane matters, and the end of the century found a new generation of writers wondering why he still commanded, if not the old homage, at least the interest of a large public. The truth was that, though much that Stead stood for had gone out of fashion, and though the " spook " business was never in fashion in any popular sense, he did to the end represent certain permanent British habits of mind. Thus he was thoroughly British in his irresponsible knight-errantry. I have never been able to understand how *Don Quixote* came to be written

by a Spaniard ; the Don is intrinsically as English as Mr. Pickwick, and I am persuaded that it is not a Spaniard, but an Englishman, who best understands him ; one may go further and say that the English reader understands him better in the reading than the Spanish author did in the writing. There was a good deal of Quixote in Stead, and that made for his popularity. He wandered from question to question, and from capital to capital, interfering with matters in which he had strictly no concern, and rousing the tumult he loved. Then, when the bright eyes of his lady Dulcinea had been sufficiently honoured, he rode off to other adventures, splendidly unconscious that the affair after all might not have been disposed of, might even have been made more difficult, by his chivalrous intervention. The Englishman of that time was partial to such championship of the afflicted and distressed. Feeling a responsibility for the morals of the rest of the world, he preferred, like a good business man, to discharge it as cheaply as possible, and as leading articles (at the most extravagant valuation) are considerably cheaper than squadrons and army corps, the tendency was to exaggerate a little the thunders of the Press. It was then an article of faith that foreign military ambition was mainly restrained by fear of *The Standard*, and that foreign striving after liberty was mainly sustained by the *Daily News*. Thus it was natural that the spectacle of Stead lecturing Kaiser, Czar, and Sultan should in some degree stir the pulses of many Englishmen. It was an assertion of our superiority ; no representative of a responsible foreign journal lectured Queen Victoria. Equally natural was it that Stead himself, finding the Czar indomitably polite, should infer that he was a sincere friend of peace, and feel easier about the Finns, or, discovering that the Sultan kept the *Review of Reviews* on file, should be inclined to believe that he had done

a real service to Macedonia. Every journalist has something in him of Mr. Pott, who believed that his articles in the *Eatanswill Gazette* exercised a decisive influence on national politics. Stead sometimes seemed to think that taking a holiday was equivalent to going on a crusade.

Another point on which Stead was in harmony with average sentiment was his combination of thorough-going Imperialism with thorough-going anti-militarism. All for omelettes, but unalterably opposed to the breaking of eggs, he went only a step further than the many who liked omelettes so long as no eggs were broken except those which might be picked up cheaply at a " Queen's shilling " apiece. He quarrelled with Rhodes over the Boer War—and so his name was struck out of the famous will—but really Rhodes was not so very far apart from himself ; Rhodes, like Stead, lacked the logic of Imperialists like Lord Milner, who not only recognised the price of Empire, but wanted to have it (by conscriptive decree) always ready in the bank. Stead, no doubt, would in any case have opposed the Boer War as a war ; why he should have gloried in the Boers as Boers was less obvious. But in Kruger, no doubt, he fancied some resemblance to Cromwell, and the Commandoes, with their Bibles and " infallible artillery," reminded him of the New Model. Stead never took much of the Puritan theology, and it had probably all volatilised in the course of his feverish life ; but instincts are more stubborn than opinions, and " Brother Boer " was also a brother Puritan. The furious attack on Rhodes, whom he had previously admired highly, also on Cromwellian grounds, was treated with high magnanimity. " I want you to understand," said Rhodes, meeting him in 1900, " that if in future you should unfortunately feel yourself compelled to attack me personally as vehemently as you have attacked my policy, it will make no differ-

ence to our friendship. I am too grateful for all I have learned from you to allow anything that you may write or say to make any change in our relations." The man who could speak thus was assuredly a great one. The man to whom it was said could not have been small.

CHAPTER XVIII

SIR HENRY FOWLER

ON the surface at least there was an incurable ordinariness about Henry Hartley Fowler, afterwards first Viscount Wolverhampton. His parts, though sound, were not brilliant; imagination he had none; his voice was harsh and unsympathetic; his appearance was singularly ungainly, and he was the sort of man who always looks at his worst when best dressed; he had absolutely no "way" with him; he rose by unexciting degrees to a rather dull sort of eminence; and at the best he could only be counted a first-rate example of the second-rate man. But, as Mr. Arnold Bennett has found profit in recognising, ordinariness carried to the extreme becomes very extraordinary, and Sir Henry Fowler, as the end of the Nineties left him, remains a figure of some significance. It would be a mistake to consider him, like (say) Mr. Childers, as a mere fragment of dullness in the mosaic of Victorian politics—a foil for the brilliance of the gold and lapis lazuli. He was something positive, if sombre and not very decorative; and he almost perfectly represented a type which must be understood if we are to make any sense at all of the Victorian time.

Sir Henry Fowler was, I believe, the first Wesleyan to become a Cabinet Minister and a Peer. His Wesleyanism was one of the main facts about him. Far more than John Bright he represented English Nonconformity. Quakerism is in truth not very English, though there can be no doubt concerning

the Englishness of its founder. There is a logical abandon about it quite out of harmony with the English taste for compromise. The opposite extreme to Catholicism, it yet resembles Catholicism in basing itself firmly on certain dogmas, and shrinking from no conclusion that logically follows such acceptance. Sir Henry Fowler belonged to that more English school of Nonconformity which is guided much more by taste than by logic. He had no quarrel with the doctrines of the Church. He loved its liturgy. He had something like a passion for extreme orderliness in public worship. When in London he would attend service at St. Margaret's, Westminster; he was married by the Church, had his children baptised and confirmed in the Church, and was himself buried in accordance with the rites of the Church. Yet he was born and bred a Wesleyan, was the son of a Wesleyan minister, and the interests of Wesleyanism were one of the main cares of his life. Such a man would be incomprehensible anywhere but in England. Here he was only a rather extreme example of a strange national tendency to choose our religious opinions much as we do our cigars—by their flavour.

In politics Sir Henry Fowler's case was much the same. His real nature was conservative. There was never a less adventurous temperament. His attitude towards the present was one of despondency, and towards the future one of apprehension. The most bigoted Tory could not be further removed than he was from that class of men described by Macaulay as "sanguine in hope, bold in speculation, always pressing forward, quick to discern the imperfections of whatever exists, disposed to think lightly of the risks and inconveniences which attend improvements, and disposed to give every change credit for being an improvement." On the contrary, he was ever the counsellor of caution and the prophet of disaster. He hugged gloom like a garment. If Conservatives

were in office, he feared for the country ; if Liberals were in office his apprehensions were merely doubled—he feared for his party as well. He could discern readily enough the imperfections of whatever existed, but even more was he impressed with the dangers of bringing something else into existence. Thus he was a Home Ruler in sentiment, but though he believed in the principle he " also believed in the possibility of buying some things too dear," and at the end of twenty years he was more convinced than at the beginning that the time was not " ripe." Thus, also, he came into Parliament as an " advanced Radical," but he remained in the capacity of a Radical with much genius for staying in the same place, a Radical at least implacably opposed to anything like " Socialistic proposals." A man of his pessimism and his caution could only be in essence a Conservative. Whence, then, his position in the forefront of Liberalism, a position so considerable that, though he was never a favourite of Mr. Gladstone, he could not be ignored ? The answer is probably that the flavour of the actual Conservative Party, like the flavour of the actual Church of England, did not appeal to him. Above all he was a Puritan, and, if a certain remnant of Puritanism still persisted in the Church, it was not conspicuous or influential in the Conservative Party. There were, of course, fox-hunters and men of pleasure on the Liberal side, but in the main they were rather camp-followers than captains, and they did not give the party its character. Further, the character of Puritan also embraced that of iconoclast. Sir Henry Fowler was a little like the seventeenth-century Puritans in being much more anxious to destroy symbols than realities. They cut down the thorn of Glastonbury and dislodged the images of saints, but they left " civil and religious liberty " in rather more parlous condition than they found it. Their nineteenth-century representative

had no desire to throw down or change the fabric of English life. But he did wish to chip off all its Gothic eccentricities (even if they happened to be also beauties), to make it seemly and prosaic, to harmonise it with his view of the utilitarian.

He was, indeed, that very strange product of the Victorian time, the matter-of-fact mystic. He believed in the world to come as in something just as real as a counting-house, and not altogether dissimilar. On the other hand, nothing outside the counting-house and the world to come had much reality for him. There was work and there was religion—and beyond these nothing, or nothing to speak of. Work, of course, in the widest sense—the satisfaction of certain personal ambitions, the serving of certain public ends, the rearing of children, the establishment of a status in life were all included, for this kind of saintliness has no regard for the " magnificence of destitution " ; while it reads its title clear to mansions in the skies it is equally insistent on an indubitable freehold of some consequence here below. This mingling of worldliness and otherworldliness was almost as old as the man. The youth of Sir Henry Fowler was fully as serious as his manhood. The son of one of the pioneers of Methodism, who had come early under the influence of the extraordinary man who was its founder, he was sent to a school for the sons of ministers at Woodhouse Grove, in Yorkshire, which seems to have borne to the academy of Mr. Wackford Squeers the same relation that an original bears to a parody. The discipline was on much the same lines as that of Dotheboys Hall, and the diet, if more decent, was scarcely more plentiful. The boys were given one holiday a year, and the only game was fives. Here, and afterwards in an equally grave London atmosphere, the lines of the boy's character were firmly set. Of a naturally clumsy build and serious dis-

position, he could hardly, in any circumstances, have grown up a handy and hearty boy. But with such schooling, and with his father " stimulating his intellectual powers " during the solitary midsummer holiday, he rapidly acquired both the virtues and disabilities which distinguished him through life. At twelve he was already a political Nonconformist, following with deep attention all debates in Parliament bearing on Dissent. At the same time the foundations had been laid of a physical awkwardness and stiffness, a distaste for exercise, and an incapacity for all the graces of life which for him made work of some kind the only tolerable condition of existence. His daughter tells us that he had little use for his hands. He could not throw a ball or hold a bat, and when he tried to play golf his clumsiness was extraordinary. The tying of a dress tie was a feat of dexterity he never mastered. He seldom walked if he could help it, and was never known to run a step. An idle day was for him one of unmitigated boredom, and he managed to communicate the weariness of it to those about him. He had a great dislike for fresh air, and could not endure an open window, whether at home, or at his office, or even at his favourite chapel. Yet he was by no means a gloomy domestic tyrant. He had married the woman of his earliest ambition, apparently by sheer force of character, for she was wealthy and much courted, and he was a sombre, reserved and heavy-footed suitor. His children he loved, and they learned to love him. He had a home in which the last word in Victorian comfort chimed harmoniously with the last word in Victorian Philistinism. He could even on occasion drink a glass of wine and take a hand of cards, though he could never recognise a five of spades at sight ; he had laboriously to count the pips. In his own way he was kindness itself to his family. " Father," says the filial biographer already quoted, " always let us

have *his* own way and gave us everything *he* wanted. But, although we were only permitted such pleasures as would recommend themselves to a middle-aged statesman, ours was nevertheless a very merry home. We laughed at everything and everybody, especially at our father, and nobody enjoyed such laughter more than he did. I never knew anyone who so thoroughly appreciated a joke against himself." But this unbending came rather late ; as a younger man, with young children, he was hopelessly stiff.

There was withal a massive innocence in the man. Of many of the facts of life he was more ignorant than seemed possible for any human being. He could read the naughtiest of novels without seeing anything objectionable, and indeed would sometimes recommend to young women books full of suggestiveness which he might have picked up and glanced at with a certain interest and no understanding. This, of course, was in the evening of his life, when his daughter's success as a novelist—a success which filled him with a certain awed delight—had modified severer early views of light literature. She relates how he used to read her manuscripts and offer " superbly useless " advice. Thus in one book there is the following scrap of conversation :

" Have they any children ? "
" No, only politics."

" Father," says his daughter, " underlined the ' No.' ' I should not say that ; it is too conclusive. I should say ' *Not yet.*' And he didn't understand why we laughed."

Such was Henry Hartley Fowler at home. In business his solemnity was intensified. The shadow of a frustrated ambition hung over all this side of his life. In his youth he had cast longing eyes on the Bar ; it would have pleased him to reach the Bench after a successful career as an advocate, and it was

with reluctance that he took up the lower branch of the profession. However, whatever he had to do must be well done, and he had won a considerable local reputation at Wolverhampton when he joined a brother Wesleyan, Sir Robert Perks, in establishing an office in London. The understanding between them was that the firm should never touch criminal work, that it should have nothing to do with building societies, that it should not take County Court cases, and that it should never act for women. This self-denying ordinance did not interfere with the success of the business. Within four years the firm had its hands full with Parliamentary Committee work, and the twenty-five years of the partnership were equally respectable and lucrative.

Meanwhile the second great ambition of Henry Fowler—the first was his marriage to Ellen Thorneycroft—was being advanced by steady interest in municipal politics, and in 1880 he became what from his earliest manhood he had wanted to be, Member of Parliament for Wolverhampton. Ten years sufficed to build a solid House of Commons reputation and to form a number of valuable friendships, of which that with John Morley was perhaps the most constant and intimate. By the Nineties he had established himself firmly as one of the indispensables of Liberalism. Yet his position was a little singular. He was not particularly liked by his chief. He was not especially popular with his colleagues. Apart from his position as a representative of Nonconformity, he had no sort of following in the country. He could hardly have maintained himself had he not been, within his limits, a strong and able man. His main quality was a cold clearness of head which fitted him to get at once to the heart of any complicated business matter. Understanding certain things thoroughly himself, he had the gift of making them understandable to others. His style of speaking

was not attractive ; and on the platform he adopted the attitudes usually associated with a Victorian philanthropist's statue, his only gesture being the monotonous sawing up and down of a clumsy hand. But he " read " well, though rather dryly—never a happy illustration, or a touch of fancy, or a suggestion of the daintier kind of scholarship ; now and again, however, he would rise to a grave and liturgical kind of declamation which was not without its impressiveness. He was master of something which was not perhaps eloquence, but occasionally had the effect of such—a power of putting a case in such fashion that even partisans were a little ashamed of resisting it. One of these sudden splendours arrived opportunely to save the Liberal Government of the Nineties from defeat. Sir Henry Fowler, who had been bitterly disappointed by Mr. Gladstone's gift of the Local Government Board, had earned his promotion from Lord Rosebery, and was more happily bestowed at the India Office. Here he had to face a serious crisis. The Viceroy in Council had decreed, in order to meet a deficiency in revenue, certain import duties on cotton and cotton goods. Lancashire, always sensitive as to its Indian market, revolted, and when the Secretary rose the dismissal of the Government seemed assured. The House would assuredly have been proof against the best debating effort of Sir William Harcourt, for it would have regarded such a speech as common form, to be met by common form in the lobbies. It would probably have been deaf to any pleading from Mr. Morley, being suspicious of him as a professor of ideals. But the plain Wolverhampton solicitor managed to carry conviction by a singular combination of sober reasoning and moral appeal. His very lack of imagination helped him ; it seemed impossible that such a man could be so moved without the most powerful reasons. " The best part of my speech," he said afterwards,

" was never delivered, but I saw the tide had turned and sat down. The art of speaking is knowing when to sit down."

Naturally enough, he never again reached the level of his Indian days, for he was seventy-six when he entered Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman's Cabinet, and even an older man politically than he was physically. There was in the late Nineties a momentary idea of making him Sir William Harcourt's successor. But he was neither a force with the people nor a favourite with the clubs ; the gift of small talk was not his, and he had neither the capacity nor the wish to cultivate arts foreign to his nature. The ruler of men must be either a man or a riddle. Sir Henry Fowler lacked humanity, and everybody knew the answer to him.

CHAPTER XIX

AUBREY BEARDSLEY

AUBREY BEARDSLEY represented most authentically a special aspect of the Nineties. There were two main attitudes in the thought of the period. Most that was virile was Imperialistic ; Mr. Kipling was but the greatest of a whole school, and Mr. Chamberlain did not so much form an Imperialistic party as place himself at the head of a party already formed. There was much that was admirable in this enthusiasm, but it tended, like most enthusiasms, to a certain falsity of view. Mr. Balfour has remarked on the difficulty of finding any enthusiast who will tell the simple truth, and the constant contemplation of maps coloured red undoubtedly led to failure to appreciate the other colours of the palette. Too much stress was laid on Medicine Hat and Bulawayo ; the silent men with strong chins, who passed their lives predominating over people black, brown, and yellow, were somewhat too readily assumed to be the only people who mattered ; and, just as the earlier nineteenth-century industrialist had looked only to more machinery to cure the ills much machinery (working fatalistically) had already created, so the late nineteenth-century Imperialist, while conscious that everything was not lovely in East Ham, could only think of making things right with another slice of East Africa.

But this school was in the main healthy ; perhaps its chief weakness was a too conscious health ; it

(*From a photograph by F. H. Evans.*)

thought too much of muscle and chest expansion, and forgot that a man has a soul to be saved as well as a biceps to be flexed. But it is more reasonable to take pride in a strong arm than to glory in a weak lung, and the simplest of the Imperialists had the advantage over the most complex of the Decadents, in that a real sanity underlay their incidental extravagances. They might be too fond of one monotonous colour scheme of red, white, and blue, but it did stand for something recognisable. But the Decadents, finding satisfaction only in art tints, went on mixing and re-mixing the primary tints until they got to something very like mud-colour, and even to mud itself. These people stood for something which can perhaps be best described as a revolt without a standard, a rebellion without object or hope. They were in arms against everything that had happened, but had no idea whatever of what they wanted to happen. Indeed, they appeared to be pretty certain that nothing genuine could happen. They seemed to be really impressed by the accident that they were near the end of a century. Two French expressions occur with disheartening frequency in the periodicals of the time. One is *chic* and the other *fin-de-siècle*. Closely consorting with these invaders was the native (or rather American-English) adjective "smart," usually used in conjunction with the substantive "set." It was the whole duty of a "smart set" (literary or otherwise) to be *chic*, and true *chic* could only be attained by being *fin-de-siècle*. So all to whom fashion was of importance, since they could not help being Victorian and nineteenth-century, deliberately set about wearing the livery of the period inside out or upside down, deriding what they could not change. There was a curiously impotent restlessness among the intellectuals of the period, like that of people imprisoned in a waiting-room during a block on the railway, or in a country house on a wet Sunday. When people are

tired of sitting still, and cannot summon resolution to go out for a walk, they are apt to depreciate the furniture and take it out of the cushions; and the Decadent movement was really an assault on Victorian console tables and antimacassars by men and women who had grown too soft in Victorian easy chairs.

Aubrey Beardsley was very typical of the Nineties in his unenjoying luxuriousness, his invalid indecorum, his trammelled originality, and his pert pessimism. He was in pictorial art much what Wilde was in literature, except that he possessed a certain conscience of the hand, so to speak, a pride and care for technical quality, which few considerable draughtsmen lack, while Wilde, though an artist also, lacked such fastidiousness, and was just as pleased with a cheap victory as with a dear one. Both he and Wilde were in revolt against convention, but each would have died rather than do anything naturally. Both were at war with the great Victorian commandment of decorum, but both respected slavishly the little law of a little clique. Both suggested the futility of all things, the one in the most precious prose, the other in the most austerely thought-out design. Both offended against all laws, human and divine, in order to be brilliant and exceptional, and both were under the thraldom of taboos with the force of the Decalogue and crotchets elevated to the dignity of a religion. Each was guilty of most extraordinarily bad taste, not a simple but a complex bad taste, reminiscent of the decaying Roman world; there was something barbaric in their over-sophistication, and something common in their over-refinement. They were much as a woman who turns up in a diamond tiara at a village penny reading, or a man who wears his orders at the dinner table of an intimate friend. Both had a curious delight in mere richness; that purring satisfaction of Wilde in a mere catalogue of precious stones—you will find

it in *The Picture of Dorian Grey*—is paralleled again and again in the joy with which Beardsley elaborates gorgeous stuffs in his designs. And in the work of both is that rather indescribable thing I have spoken of as a revolt without a standard and without a hope. Neither knew quite where he expected to get ; the main thing was to do something that shocked the orthodox. It was a feature common to many quite different people. The Socialists, for example, fought without making the smallest provision for a victory ; they were content to make victory seem worthless to the party in possession. Mr. Shaw was most intent on showing that the system in being did not and could not work ; he was far less interested in proving his own case. Conservatism was content with Liberal failure ; it had no particular formula of its own. Novelists drank absinthe with perhaps a faint hope that they might write like Guy de Maupassant, but with a much stronger wish that they would be saved from writing like Sir Walter Besant.

Pessimism is always barren ; a pessimism which needs continual conscious cultivation is merely ridiculous. Aubrey Beardsley was saved from being merely ridiculous by that conscience of the hand to which I have alluded. He might have been Mr. Shaw's model for the character of Dubedat, the invalid artist of *The Doctor's Dilemma*, who had every fault but treason to the truth of line and the " might of design." Indeed, only a real passion for his art could have enabled him to compress so much achievement into so short a space of time. At the beginning of the Nineties he was unknown ; the decade was little more than half completed when he died ; yet in the interval he had become the most discussed artist in England, and had made for himself a place in English art which is still notable. He was gifted with a fatal precocity. Born and educated at Brighton, he lived during his earlier years the unwholesomely pampered existence

of an infant phenomenon. It was, however, music and not draughtsmanship which brought him this early notice ; such things as survive from his 'teens and earlier are in no way remarkable. It was not until he had been working for some time in an insurance office in London that certain drawings, done in his spare time, were put prominently before the world by the discrimination of a critic. In a moment the unknown youth became famous, and the short remainder of his life was a struggle to get through the commissions showered on him. He had so far had no sort of training ; he now made some attempt to learn the grammar of his art, but his attendance at the chosen studio was extremely desultory, and he might almost be said to be entirely self-taught. He was a strange mixture of industry and slackness. Under the inspiration of an idea, he would shut himself up for days in his rooms, with the blinds drawn and the electric light on, working at designs in a sort of concentrated fury. Then for weeks he would idle or worse than idle, while the publishers raged over broken engagements. For he retained his passion for music ; he liked society in which he could exercise a kind of hard wit which was his ; he had a fancy for becoming a man of letters ; and places where modish men and women were to be seen were frequented partly because he liked the surroundings for themselves, and partly because they gave him types and ideas.

Beardsley had one great talent apart from the mere mastery of line. Over-civilised himself, he was unequalled in suggesting the tragedy of over-civilisation, though quite possibly he did not feel it. He could portray with remorseless truth, though in a convention as strict as that of an old Chinese artist, certain types of modern men and women. He is the limner of the pinched soul, the pampered body, the craving without appetite, the animalism without

animal health. At Brighton, even as a boy, he must have studied with close attention those types which are easily lost in a great city, but are isolated at the seaside as on a lighted stage, and, dominating nature as actors do their scenic properties, give the impression that large fortunes and small passions are the stuff life is made of. To Beardsley the greater light and the less only existed as astronomical facts of minor interest ; his real element was the arc-light of the street or the shaded glow of the interior. There is a sense of joyless depravity about his men and women, as if vice were a routine, and even a solemn social ritual ; and his illustrations of the " Morte d'Arthur " are made ridiculous by the perpetual recurrence of the haggard eyes and small, evil features of people Beardsley had studied in a Piccadilly restaurant or the Casino at Dieppe. Anachronism, so often the joy and life of literature, is no necessary fault in the decorative artist, and nobody need quarrel with Beardsley for taking liberties with the gowning of Isolde. But it was an anachronism without excuse to swap souls as well as dresses. The chief fault was with those who commissioned him to do work for which he was unfitted. An artist who really loved the domes and minarets of the Brighton Pavilion should have been manifestly out of the running for the illustration of the heroic.

Those who think of genius as a form of disease of course connect the radical unhealth which is the stamp of everything Beardsley did with the physical malady which claimed him as an early victim, forgetting that many men with much the same peculiarities have lived to a good old age with no trouble more serious than an occasional indigestion. If he were an invalid, Beardsley, like Stevenson and Henley, was a virile one, and it may be doubted whether the lines of his career were predestined for him by his phthisical disposition. His disease was very far advanced before

it left any considerable mark on his work, and it might almost be said that up to the end he was making progress. A more reasonable explanation of the peculiar flavour of his work is to be found in the reaction of a highly individual mind to an intellectual fashion. The fashion came from France, and was the result of the defeat of 1870 ; it was born on the other side of the Channel of a quite explicable despair, but adopted on this side of the Channel only for wantonness. After the terrible year, the French could no longer pretend to one sort of primacy in Europe, but a primacy of some kind seems to be necessary to the life of France, and so the French intellectuals pretended to a primacy in decay. The arguments, unconsciously worked out, seemed to run something like this : " We, the French, are the most civilised race of mankind. We have been beaten by healthy barbarians. We are doomed to be beaten again, some time or other, by the same healthy barbarians. Health is the quality of barbarism. Let us, therefore, make a boast of our unhealth, and if it does not exist let us make a false pretence of it. The tricolour is lowered. Let us raise the yellow flag of the lazar-house." The yellow flag was accordingly unfurled, and the Yellow Book was the answering signal in England. Most that was unwholesome in England in the Nineties was French in origin, and most that was unwholesome in France sprang from a poisoned wound then only twenty years old. Beardsley was Beardsley chiefly because Bismarck was Bismarck.

Fate denied Beardsley any chance of outgrowing what may possibly have been after all only the mood of youthful cynicism. His health broke down definitely in the spring of 1896, and the next two years were a mournful, hopeless, and rather lonely struggle against increasing weakness. He took refuge for the winter at Bournemouth, where he lived in a house called " Muriel," of which he wrote to a friend : " I

feel as shy of my address as a boy at school is of his Christian name when it is Ebenezer or Aubrey." A few months later his troubled spirit sought repose in the Roman Catholic Church; he made his first confession in March, 1897. Commenting somewhat earlier on a priest who was also a painter, he had remarked: "What a stumbling-block such pious men must find in the practice of their art"; now he observed of Pascal that "he understood that to become a Christian the man of letters must sacrifice his gifts, just as Mary Magdalene must sacrifice her beauty." "The most important step of my life," he said of his conversion. "I feel now like someone who has been standing waiting on the doorstep of a house upon a cold day and who cannot make up his mind to knock for a long while. At last the door is thrown open, and all the warmth of kind hospitality makes glad the frozen traveller."

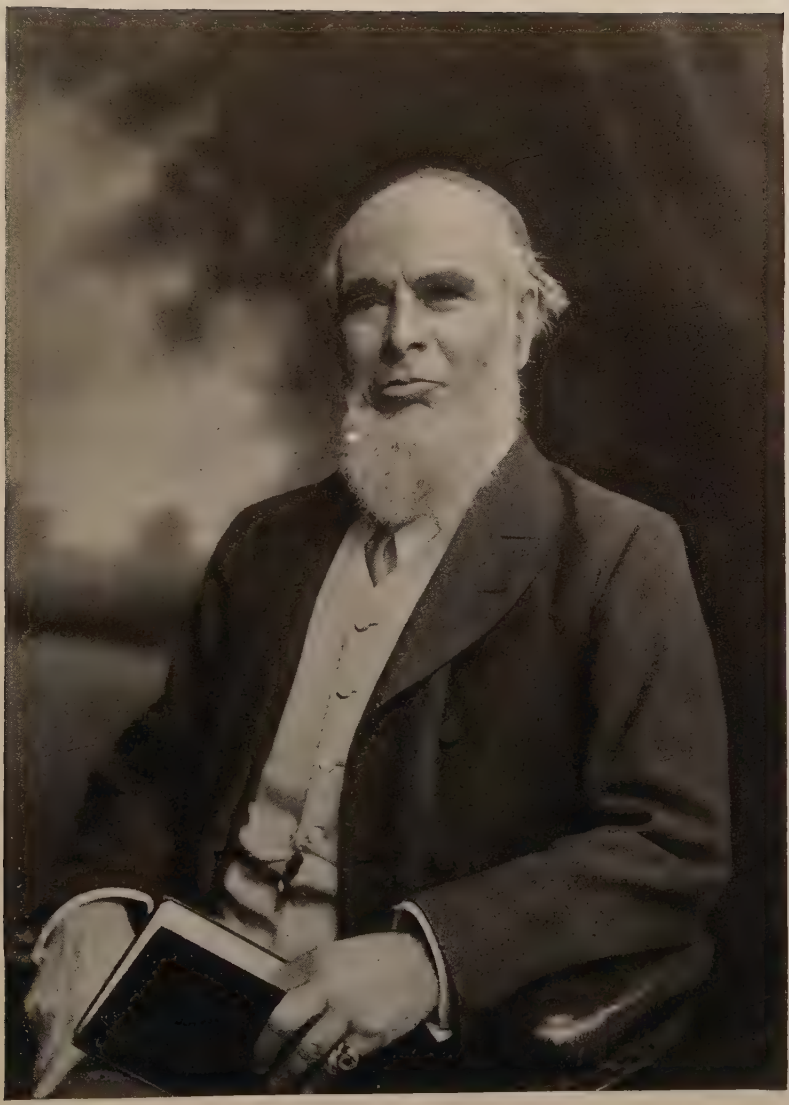
An improvement in his health enabled him to go abroad during the summer. But the approach of autumn gave him warning that hopes were illusory; at Mentone he was too ill to touch paper, and he died in the early spring of 1898. Six years had comprised the span of his artistic life, and two of them had been spent in continuous illness.

CHAPTER XX

LORD COURTNEY OF PENWITH

WHEN any man declaims "Fiat justitia, ruat cœlum," it is not easy to avoid the suspicion that (whatever his passion for principle) he is pretty sure that the heavens will not fall. If the heavens did fall he would forget all about the fine "quillets of the law." Any woman, according to Beckie Sharp, can be good on a sufficient income; and with men, also, the love of principle thrives best in comfortable surroundings. The true test of honesty is not whether a man will resign an Under-Secretaryship rather than give his vote for a measure he disapproves: he may be rather tired of being an Under-Secretary. The true test is whether he will pay a bill when he has to go without a week's dinners to do it. There are no doubt men who pass that test; they should be honoured, though by the nature of things they seldom are: it is not that kind of principle which wins fame or money. The kind of sacrifice to principle which wins reverence is that which is often really not much sacrifice at all. We applaud a man for being specially and splendidly honest when the fact is only that he can afford to be unusually stubborn.

Lord Courtney of Penwith is an example of inflexible principle in politics. In these days we are apt to think of him as representing a rare type. But it is in fact a quite common type in certain conditions; that it is not commoner to-day may be explained not by any general deterioration of human nature,



LORD COURTNEY OF PENWITH.

but by the excessive seriousness of the times. When we condemn an age as immoral we should often be more just to call it unfortunate. There is no reason, for example, to believe that the general character of upper-class Englishmen in 1665 was really baser than that of upper-class Englishmen in 1635. But in the singularly peaceful and prosperous atmosphere of the early years of Charles I people were able to indulge their consciences to the point of faddism ; the time was one of what we should call cranks—Calvinistic cranks, ritualistic cranks, anti-Shipmoney cranks, Filmerite cranks—all so stiff with principle that they rejected the very notion of compromise on matters essentially capable of accommodation. On the other hand, after painful experience of what principle carried to extremes may mean, the men of 1665 erred in the opposite direction of believing all principle to be a mistake : a generation of opportunists succeeded that of purists. In the same way the long Victorian peace produced a race of public men who, like John Bright, made of principle an idol, and were constantly dodging in and out of office, like the figures in an old-fashioned weather-glass, according as their love of influence or their dislike of certain things happened to be uppermost. They gained a great fame as specially honest men ; and they are constantly quoted against their successors, as Pitt was quoted against Walpole. But Lord Rosebery was right in thinking of Pitt as a luxury only to be afforded once in a way, and we could ill bear the expense of many Brights. The moral splendour of him is no doubt a national asset, but it had to be paid for ; his fame as the man of conscience was achieved at some cost to the community ; many a question bequeathed to us from that time might have been settled had he and some others denied themselves one of their two great luxuries—the enjoyment of being powerful and the enjoyment of

feeling sinless. When we compare the robust honesty of some great Victorians with the supple temper of present-day politicians, we should be just to our own people. We should remember that the heavens appeared to be quite a fixture in Victoria's time, while latterly they have really looked like tumbling about our ears.

Should an intellectual conviction be always regarded as a moral imperative ? If we think a thing is wrong in the sense of being politically inexpedient, should we risk the existence of all sorts of other things, which we think right, in order to save ourselves from the stigma of inconsistency or lack of principle ? On the answer depends largely our judgment of men like Lord Courtney. To a certain class of mind he represented, almost more than any man after the death of Bright, the unspoiled hero in politics. To me he is not a hero. I have tried extremely hard to think of him as one, and indeed he was not deficient in something closely resembling heroism. After he had made himself modestly comfortable in life, he scorned worldly advantage if it could only be gained at the cost of conscience. He might have been all sorts of things with a little more compliance, a little less loyalty to his tyrannical inward monitor. On all questions he took his own view, and if that view led him into the wilderness, into the wilderness he went, sturdy and uncomplaining. His abilities entitled him to look forward to the very highest positions in the State. The Chancellorship of the Exchequer was easily within his reach, and he might even have become, in due course, Prime Minister. Instead, he filled one or two minor places in a Liberal Administration, was for a few years Chairman of Committees of the House of Commons, failed to get elected Speaker, and finally accepted that coronet which is for larger men something like the link-extinguisher still seen on old London houses—it marks the end

of the journey. The career, relatively to the man, was a failure. Of course, it was in some sense a failure far more honourable than many glittering successes, for Courtney failed because he would not succeed by embracing the philosophy expressed in the lines :

> "The Lord in His mercy He fashioned us holler
> In order we might our principles swaller."

But the question of proportion always arises, even in questions of morals. One honours a man who yields his own life rather than consent to be a liar in the real sense of being a betrayer. But one does not honour a man who sacrifices, not merely himself, but others, because he will not sully his lips with a very innocent fib. The Early Christian who went to the lions rather than deny his faith was admirable. The Early Christian who sent a comrade to the lions because he would not say " Not at home " to the Prætorian centurion was less admirable. So, before we are quite lost in admiration over Lord Courtney's renunciation, it is just as well to recall what was the cause of it. It was his enthusiasm for Proportional Representation, which politicians generally shorten into " P.R." because the name is as difficult of pronunciation as the thing itself is of popular comprehension. In 1884 Mr. Gladstone brought in a Redistribution Bill ; Mr. Courtney wanted it to be accompanied or preceded by a measure embodying the " true principle of representation," of which his appreciation was even then " more than thirty years old." So while Mr. Gladstone went his own course, Mr. Courtney would not go with him ; and the two parted with mutual compliments ; those on Courtney's side contrast rather piquantly, in their almost exaggerated respect, with his downright statement a few years later that Mr. Gladstone was a " superannuated old goose."

Now consistency is certainly important ; proportional representation is no doubt important too. But the consistency of Leonard Courtney rather recalls the virtue as developed in Dr. Sangrado, who believed in bleeding and hot water as a cure for everything, and in that belief " made more widows and orphans than the siege of Troy." It will be remembered that Gil Blas once roused a certain doubt in his master by advising him to try chemical preparations, if only for curiosity. " But," said the doctor, " I have published a book, in which I have extolled the use of frequent bleeding and aquæous draughts ; and wouldst thou have me go and decry my own work ? " " You are certainly in the right," rejoined the accommodating Gil Blas, " you must not give your enemies such a triumph over you ; they would say you are at last disabused, and therefore ruin your reputation ; perish rather the nobility, clergy, and people, and let us continue in our old path." There was always something of this self-indulgent recklessness of consequence in the conscientiousness of Leonard Courtney and the school of which he was almost the latest important representative. " Let my name be blighted, provided France be free," cried Danton. " Reputation—O what is the reputation of this man or of that ? " That is the point of view of the hero-blackguard whom great emergencies so often call forth. " Let what will happen, so no man can call me untrue to my principles," is another point of view, that of the man who cannot be quite fully a hero because he is constitutionally incapable of being the least bit of a blackguard. Thin partitions divide heroism and blackguardism ; all space lies between them and the great kingdom of the smug. The best of the smug can rise to very considerable heights, but their fastidiousness prevents them achieving the splendour of perfect selflessness ; they might be content with the locusts and wild honey of

desert exile, but they could not do without a tooth-brush. Lord Courtney was not afraid of the desert. He could live without popularity and often went out of his way to flout the herd. He never feared the consequences of being right. But a greater man would have been less timorous of the consequences of being occasionally a little wrong. He would, over a dozen questions—this business of the franchise, for example, Ireland, South Africa, and the Great War —have struck a balance between opposing considerations, and in no case would he have cast into either scale the thought of his own reputation. He would not thus have been false to himself. But he would have been truer to greater interests than himself.

It may perhaps be said that the real hero of Courtney's life was not himself, but his father. At least it is true that to his father he owed the possibility of exhibiting on a considerable stage those qualities which might otherwise have made him only a rather crotchety clerk or the more cavilling kind of accountant. Without the paternal self-sacrifice Courtney, if still inclined to public life, might no doubt have become a village Hampden, a parochial " character," and a terrible thorn in the side of some Board of Guardians. But he certainly would not have arrived by the broad road of the University to distinction in the greater life of the nation. To many by far the most interesting part of Mr. Gooch's admirable *Life* will be the pages which deal with the West-country home of the Fifties, from which young Courtney emerged to fight his way in the world. His father was manager of Bolitho's Bank at Penzance : a quiet, reserved, intellectual, and rather depressed man, weighed down with responsibility both in his office and his home ; one of those poorer middle-class fathers to whose devotion and vicarious ambition the nineteenth century owed so many of its most remarkable minds. Both he and Mrs. Courtney were

Puritans, and their views united with their circumstances to make the home one of Spartan discipline and simplicity. But, if the father did not indulge his children, he literally lived for their futures, and pinched himself woefully to secure them a footing on the main staircase of life. When he left school young Courtney entered the bank. The prospects in the service of the Bolithos were not alluring, and partly with some vague idea of " getting on," partly through a real hunger for the things of the mind, he read in his spare time, with a system unusual in youth. Thus equipped, in 1851 he won a sizarship at St. John's, Cambridge, and as a result he was awarded in the course of four years Exhibitions amounting in the aggregate to about £170. He might, of course, just as well have had one shilling if his father had not come to his help ; it was the defect then, as now, of our higher educational system that it gave no chance to the really poor. To find the sinews of war the elder Courtney had to borrow from the bank, and there is a singular pathos in the letters of the father, anxious that his son should have his full chance, but worried over the cost of the experiment of converting an obviously efficient young clerk into something incalculable and possibly not at all satisfactory. The father is " a little surprised " at the first bill, but wishes his son not to be " oppressed by the fear " that he is running his father too hard ; " go on with your studies as coolly and quietly as possible, expend what is needed, and let me find the means of keeping up the race." But he cannot help thinking that the strain is cruel. " Let no one," he adds, " laugh you into an expense which a few minutes' consideration may point out as unnecessary. Do not be ashamed of saying you are poor. If any man wishes to bear you down with his riches and expenditure, let him alone, or crush him down by intellect. Go on with a quiet, calm dignity,

and in a short time no one will ask you whether your allowance be £50 or £500 per annum."

When Courtney got the Second Wranglership his admirable parent did not "feel that elation some may imagine"; all this, he pointed out, was not the conclusion but the beginning of a career. "It seems," he remarked, "you must go on very parsimoniously for the next twelve months, but do not on any account go in debt. I would rather screw up tighter at home"—where things were terribly tight already. Young Courtney was rapidly justifying himself. But even when there came a Fellowship of £160 a year the poor bank-manager refused to rejoice utterly. "Your mother often observes whatever your gains they seem to be always swallowed up. . . . Consider the position of the family if anything should happen to me. I do not mean to be a miserly niggard, but do not consider a thing necessary because someone richer than yourself has it. The great curse of the times is the desire of cutting a dash, being in appearance something you are not in reality. . . . I have written this because I find myself unable to do what I could formerly accomplish with little difficulty."

It is the old story of the brilliant performer in the field and the humble munition-maker at home; behind every shining success lies years, and perhaps generations, of obscure effort; and the feet of the mighty tread now on dead men's bones and now on the bodies of the living. The greatest sacrifices incidental to Courtney's career were after all not his own.

The scholastic career did not attract, and Courtney decided for London and the Bar. How a man of his character, with a rigidity so often displayed in excess, conceived of law as his appropriate element is something of a mystery. Probably at this time his chief idea was still "getting on"; but the choice of the profession in which of all others a man has to be

supple and accommodating is nevertheless singular in a person of Courtney's moral and mental make-up. Nor is it easy to understand how Courtney, in after years so inflexible, could get on well with *The Times* under Delane, who " expected writers to reflect with fair closeness his spirit "—a spirit which was certainly in most respects as far removed from that of the mature Courtney as anything could well be. Yet Courtney did get on with *The Times* and Delane exceedingly well. He was, indeed, found impossible and " hopelessly wrong " in his attitude towards the Germans in 1870 ; he opposed the annexation of Alsace-Lorraine, while Delane was wholly for Germany and *væ victis* ; but on the whole he seems to have accomplished with fair closeness the " reflection " of Delane's views, and was even anticipated as that great editor's successor.

The one hopeless " wrongness " which stands out in Courtney's journalistic record was not only honourable to himself, but prophetically characteristic. He represented at once the least and the most amiable sides of the old Liberal philosophy. His faith in individualism was not only hard and narrow ; it sometimes positively verged on the barbarous. He talked, indeed, much excellent sense concerning Socialism and " social reform," about the need of individual sobriety, prudence, and industry, and the folly of expecting any one political device to supply their place. But his satisfaction with the free operation of competition, his impatience with any attempt to temper it, were marvellous. " I am not for helping the weak," he said once ; " I wish to remove impediments, to help those who are helping themselves." He never seems to have reflected that his own success simply depended on the principle of " helping the weak," and that it was an object for which public means might have sufficed just as well as the cruel impoverishment of the self-sacrificing

father who pinched and tormented himself to give an industrious and intelligent boy what every industrious and intelligent boy, of any class or condition, should receive as a right. In this, as in other things, he was in his later years the most prophetic and alert representative of the "Benthamee" philosophy against which Carlyle raved. But there was a noble side to this rather arid faith, and Courtney was on that side, as on the other, its complete exponent. He could not see, or would not see, that complete liberty to the strong, the removal of all "impediments" in the way of those who "help themselves," means in practice the depression and enslavement of the weak. But when the weak had ceased even to be nominally free, when they wore a brass collar like Gurth's, instead of an invisible collar (though stronger and more throttling), wrought in the factories of Circumstance, his voice was raised with an old-prophetic fervour in their defence. To him the oppressed nation's cause was as sacred as that of the obviously oppressed individual's. It is true that his vision was somewhat partial and occasionally faulty. He had the prejudice of a Protestant in most Irish matters. He undoubtedly misinterpreted the spirit of the South African oligarchy, just as he misunderstood the spirit of the German nation when he urged as early as 1915 the possibility of an honourable and stable accommodation. But, however mistaken, he was always in these greater matters animated by a very noble spirit—the spirit which, in spite of its many limitations, lent a moral dignity to the old Liberalism. It is no doubt unfortunate that that spirit may be so easily confused with another, that the generous tolerance of other national aims may be construed as indifference to one's own country's welfare, and that the attitude of universal benevolence can so often seem to consist with a practical repudiation of the obligation of the patriot. But, if Lord Courtney

incurred the reproach of loving every nation but his own, the fault was simply with his manner. At heart he had nothing in common with any of those anti-patriots who used his great name and fame.

Yet, with the widest charity, it cannot be said that his latest appearances in public were happy. And if on specific occasions he was far from helpful, in general his helpfulness was diminished by an exaggerated sense of the respect due to his own convictions. " My opinion, right or wrong," may be not less pernicious an attitude than " My country, right or wrong," and there were times when Lord Courtney's passion for principle was scarcely distinguishable from mere obstinacy. He would have left a higher fame had it been his lot, as it was Bright's, to live wholly through a period of comparative calm. But in the years when a kind of moral arthritis had stiffened joints never very supple, he came against really big things undreamed of in his political philosophy, and there was something at once grotesque and tragic in his application to them of a formula equally inappropriate and inadequate. It was even a misfortune for the moral ideals that he held aloft that they were sustained by one whose mode of thought was obviously no less antique than the Pickwickian blue coat with brass buttons and the canary-coloured waistcoat which proclaimed him the man of a past time.

CHAPTER XXI

THOMAS HARDY

IT is no exaggeration to say that for many people the publication of *Tess of the D'Urbervilles* was the most important event of the Nineties.

For nearly twenty years the name of Thomas Hardy had been associated with a constantly ascending literary reputation. *Under the Greenwood Tree*, emerging modestly in 1872, was practically unnoticed despite its merits, and the bulk of a small edition found its way to that graveyard of authors' hopes, the threepenny tray of the second-hand bookshop. But there it chanced to meet the eye of Frederick Greenwood. Naturally attracted by its name, he bought the book, at once recognised its great merit, sought out the author, and gave him opportunities of serial publication which he would otherwise have lacked. Thus favoured, Thomas Hardy produced during the Seventies and Eighties a great mass of consistently high work. But it was not till 1891 that he won full recognition from the greater public.

There are two tests which a work of the imagination must pass before it can be called successful in the highest and best sense. It must satisfy the critical. It must appeal to the uncritical. The thing which the connoisseur alone can appreciate is often fine art ; it is seldom truly great art. The thing which may momentarily capture the crowd may be pure rubbish ; it is only just to say that most of the crowd are well enough aware that it is nothing more ; having an appetite for anything readable they accept

it on the countryman's principle that some beer is better than other beer, but that there is no bad beer. But when the connoisseur can find no great flaw, and the crowd feels a compelling charm, we are most surely in the region of the greatest. Sometimes, as in the case of the Bible, of *Gulliver*, and of *Hamlet*, the crowd and the critics make their discoveries simultaneously ; sometimes, as in the case of *Pilgrim's Progress*, a book is prized by blacksmiths and cowmen long before its genius is recognised by the refined. *Tess of the D'Urbervilles* was an instance in the former kind. All but a few critics at once declared that it was the best achievement so far of a very fine writer ; the crowd agreed (and signified the same in the usual manner) that it was a very capital story, only spoiled (from their point of view) by the extreme dismalness of its philosophy.

One of the main facts concerning Thomas Hardy is that he began life as an architect. The first work from his pen was a prize essay on " Coloured Brick and Terra Cotta Architecture," written while he was still studying in London under Sir Arthur Blomfield. This was in 1863, when Hardy was only twenty-three years old ; it was not until 1871 that he published his first novel, the very curious and interesting *Desperate Remedies*, and only in 1874 did he consider his prospects as a writer sufficient to justify final choice in favour of the literary calling. He had written much during his life in London, but chiefly verse. The fact, together with that of his professional training, is significant. Mr. Hardy has remained, I think, first an architect and next a poet ; in all his work the first quality is power of design, and the second form and discipline in expression. His great contours are as true as the sweep of a line of classic pillars ; his details have the finish of Greek statuary. In most " collected works " the one thing evident is a lack of unity, not only of manner but of essence.

THOMAS HARDY, O.M.

But in the Wessex novels the most casual reader is struck with the continuity of the inspiration. There is, of course, a change from the vernal freshness of *Under the Greenwood Tree* to the autumnal gloom of the pure tragedies, but the change is like that of the natural seasons ; we have only different aspects of the same climatic scheme. There is an increasing sense of mastery over material as the pen grows in dexterity, but the material is chosen and disposed on principles as clearly indicated in the first of the series as in the last. It is as if Mr. Hardy had conceived his literary life much as Haussman conceived a great Paris thoroughfare, as if he had seen before him in the early Seventies a long avenue of lofty and level achievement, rising to a lordly eminence fit to display the masterpieces of his maturity. It is hard to think of another example in English of consistency so complete ; in fact, it is hard to think of Hardy as of the true fellowship of English writers, though his themes are so emphatically of the English soil. He is, at bottom, more an old Greek than a modern Briton.

We have here the architect. In the finish of the details we have the poet. Those who think of the Muse as a dishevelled harridan may dispute. But those who regard the poet as bound, like any other kind of artist, to observe the conventions attaching to his medium will agree that the discipline gained in versification is observable in all Hardy's prose. It is not that he makes ostentatious chase of the " right word." Any word which will serve his purpose well enough he uses, just as the bricklayer does not discard a brick which happens to be a millimetre or so out of the true ; such finicky fastidiousness he rightly feels is for the amateur, and not for the craftsman. But the word, like the brick, must be right enough, and there must be no question as to the way it is built into the sentence, or the way the sentence is built into

the page, or the page into the chapter, or the chapter into the book. That great critic, Mr. Curdle, spoke of a " universal dove-tailedness " as the mark of the artist. I can think of no more fitting description of the perfection of Mr. Hardy's literary joinery.

A word may be said of the material. Mr. Hardy was born near Dorchester, where he still lives, and has lived ever since he forsook London in yet early life. Anyone who called on him would find a man of very ordinary appearance in a very ordinary house. I remember one young London journalist who, greatly daring, did so call on him round about his seventieth birthday in order to discuss (with a view to subsequent publication) how it feels to be seventy and a classic. Hardy—whom Mr. H. G. Wells described as a " grey little man "—received this adventurer with a mechanical courtesy, veiling inflexible disapproval. No man can be more amiable, in conversation or correspondence, to those who have some sort of right, as Wessex compatriots or fellows of the craft, to claim his attention. But none can be more drily discouraging to impertinence. On this occasion the dry mood naturally prevailed. The visitor explained that he wanted a " story." The author pointed to the landscape from the window, intimated that it had already afforded plenty of material for one writer, and that its capacities were still unexhausted and perhaps inexhaustible. But, when the visitor explained that he had not come down from London to write about scenery, Mr. Hardy not merely declined to be " interviewed," he even showed (or simulated) an incapacity to understand what " interviewing " was, or how any human being could be possibly interested in the private affairs of a mere writer of books. There are, indeed, few lions so determinedly unleonine. But, in his capacity of a citizen, Mr. Hardy is by no means unsocial. Party-

going has never appealed to him. But he has a quiet gift of friendship, and some sense of public obligation. He used to occupy a fairly regular seat on the county Bench, and has written pleasantly of his experiences as a Justice Silence. He has taken much interest in local performances of his own novels in dramatised form. He is a great lover of the local museum. Most, indeed, that concerns his fellow-townsmen is not altogether alien to him. He could not have written so well about Wessex if he had not been a great artist in words. But neither could he have written so well had he not been, most intensely, a Wessex man. Dorset is still, in the main, one of the least changed of English counties, and the glittering modernities of some of its seaside places only give ironic emphasis to that sense one gets of the Roman pavement on which all the later civilisations rest. It is this sense that pervades all the Wessex novels. Mr. Kipling stands for the idea of horizontal extension ; we learn from him how wide a place is the world, and how tiny a place our own particular spot in the world. Mr. Hardy stands for the idea of vertical extension ; he shows us that on a half-acre plot we can reach the centre of everything, provided we go deep enough. Tess is only a village girl, but the forces that made her, and will presently rend her, are older than those bones which are still dug up, in company with coins of Claudius or Hadrian, just beneath the turf of a Wessex field. The Dundee marmalade pot which she dedicates to the poor little heathen child which the curate would not bury in consecrated ground is one with the tear jugs in the Dorchester Museum. The coarse seducer is related to the Norman ancestors of Tess, who, rollicking home from a fray, dealt hard measure to some rural damsel of their day ; the shame-bought parasol is brought into congruity not only with the Bournemouth esplanade but with the relics of human

sacrifice which for unknown ages have caught the first beams of the sun on Salisbury Plain. There is nothing of archæological priggishness in Mr. Hardy ; but there is a deep sense of the unity of past and present, and if his novels are not crowded with living beings they hold a teeming population of ghosts. It is the speciality of a man living in a cemetery. Durdles, with his intimacy with the " old 'uns," might have written thus if he had enjoyed a literary gift.

I believe it was Mr. Gardiner who, quoting some genius for summary classification, divided writers into " dismal coves " and " cheerful blokes." Mr. Hardy has in certain moods a sense of the lights as well as the shadows of life : some of his earlier novels have the freshness and the open-air pleasantness of a good Morland, and, though I can never feel at home with his higher-class people, he can be fairly humorous in reproducing the talk of the poor. But in general he is not a cheerful bloke. Others have made themselves ridiculous in their resolve to secure a happy ending at all costs. Mr. Hardy is never ridiculous ; he has the undeviating dignity of an undertaker's man. But if he ever arrives at the point where a less consummate master would infallibly be ridiculous, it is always in his determination to wring our bosoms like so much washing when he might well have let us off with a slighter pang. It may, for example, have been necessary to kill poor Tess : she is marked for slaughter in the first chapter. But it was not necessary to make such dreadful sport with her. The author accuses the Immortals. But the Immortals never wrought this infamy ; they might have killed her, but with a certain sense of what was due to her dignity. It was Mr. Hardy who treated her with as little respect as a gamekeeper does a stoat.

Mr. Chesterton, with the severity of the optimist,

has dealt sternly with Mr. Hardy the pessimist. While George Meredith sought the lonely but healthy hills, Mr. Hardy " went botanising in the swamp " ; and it was a thousand pities that the man with the healthy and manly view of life had the crabbed and perverse style, while the man with the crabbed and perverse view of life had the healthy and manly style. For Mr. Hardy, according to Mr. Chesterton, expresses in perfect English the meditations of " the village atheist brooding and blaspheming over the village idiot." This would seem a little sweeping. Yet most readers must sometimes have been conscious of a doubt of the perfect wholesomeness of the limpid stream Mr. Hardy offers for their refreshment ; its clear sparkle is reminiscent of those springs which (the scientists tell us) abound in carbonic acid gas, and (the old inhabitants hint) come from suspiciously near the place of dead men's bones.

It is good that we should all be reminded, especially those of us who live on little islands of comfort and complacency, of the sea of misery in which so many swim desperately and ultimately founder. But is it good that we should be told, in very beautiful English, that the victims of such misery are simply the sport of the Immortals, that man struggles for ever helplessly in the grip of Fate, that this helpless struggle has been going on for all time, and that it will go on for all further time? Dickens, the unrepentant optimist, was like a jolly man in a tap-room who leads the chorus of roysterers, insists that milk-punch is the jolliest thing imaginable, snaps his finger at last week's dun and to-morrow's headache, and intimates that it would be folly (and even sin) to go home till morning—at any rate until justice has been done to the bitter ale and broiled bones which the thoughtful landlord has in view for the small hours. But half-way through the revel this jolly person, going outside for a moment, comes

across a starving waif. He returns at once to his boon companions, makes their hearts bleed with his pathos (which is none the less roughly effective because it is a little tinged with the milk-punch), organises a " whip-round " of a few shillings each, and so does really simplify the problem of that individual waif. True, only a very insignificant impression has been made on the mass of unseen misery. But the one item of visible misery has been relieved, and (perhaps more important) a disposition has been created on a number of not unpleasant people to recognise and relieve misery when they see it.

But Mr. Hardy, the pessimist, his beautiful style never vulgarised and his fine intellect never flustered by milk-punch, has no such effect. He deftly exhibits his samples of hell, intimates that there is a quite unlimited stock fully up to specification, and rather hopes that he will be able to show you something even more striking by the opening of the spring season. Tess is not bad. But " Jude the Obscure " has also his points ; in fact, the wholesale house for which we travel is not to be surpassed for variety and quality of misery. Somebody accused Carlyle (I think) of bringing a load of woe to one's doorstep and leaving it there. Mr. Hardy does not exactly leave it. He is far more thoughtful than that. He rings the bell, explains with perfect charm and lucidity every item in the pack of trouble, and carefully explains to the householder that, however mean he may feel, it is no good his trying to do anything. That highly human (and not undesirable) instinct of Mr. Snagsby to try on all occasions what a half-crown will do is frozen by a sense not only of helplessness but almost of impiety. Is not one even a presumptuous worm to think of opposing a miserable thirty pence to the implacable operation of Circumstance ?

Mr. Hardy's depression steadily grows as he gets older. There is, it is true, much bitterness in his more youthful poems. But it is the sort of bitterness that goes with clever youth. A somewhat more buoyant note distinguishes the work of his early manhood ; but with middle age the shadows deepen, and a deep and almost unrelieved sadness broods over all. It would be untrue to say that Mr. Hardy has no humour ; is there no humour in that question of the rustic, in defending the ways of Providence, " D'ye think the man's a fool ? " But it is scarcely untrue to say that Mr. Hardy's humour is commonly as depressing as his gloom ; it has much the same mournful effect as those infrequent flashes of the comic spirit which emphasise the determined dismalness of Mr. Galsworthy. Mr. Hardy's humour has nothing sunny in it ; it is rather like the arclight which, on a frosty night, makes us see the cold as well as feel it. One can hardly recall another great English novelist who has no hearty, genial, enjoying laugh in him. But one can find many foreign counterparts to Mr. Hardy, ancient and modern ; if he seems colder than they, it is only a question of climate. It is often chilly round the Mediterranean, but one can do without a fire ; in England one wants, if not the grateful open blaze, at least some efficient system of central heating. Reading much Hardy has the effect of sitting in a beautifully furnished room on a February day without a fire ; but the simile is not quite exact—there should be all the elements of the fire, except the heat.

Possibly it is in the very gentleness of Mr. Hardy that we may look for the secret of this pessimism. His detestation of any form of cruelty may have embittered his indictment of the cruelty of Fate. In one of his books he dwells for a moment on the pain of a wounded pheasant, and turns away with an imprecation against its wounders. But there would

be no pheasants without shooters, and most pheasants live happily and die painlessly. Equally are Tess and Jude the exceptions. It is the defect—and even the artistic defect—of Mr. Hardy that he manages to convey the impression that they are the rule.

CHAPTER XXII

EARL SPENCER

IN a famous passage Lord Morley of Blackburn referred to a meeting during the early Nineties in the famous library at Althorp :

" A picture to remember. Spencer with his noble carriage and fine red beard. Mr. Gladstone, seated on a low stool, discoursing as usual, playful, keen, versatile ; Rosebery, saying little, but now and then launching a pleasant *mot*; Harcourt, cheery, expansive, witty. Like a scene from one of Dizzy's novels, and all the actors men with parts to play."

The scene is now almost as distant as one from a Sheridan comedy. The Earl is dead ; the library is in exile ; the whole scheme of things to which both belonged has passed away. The very type of aristocracy which Earl Spencer so worthily represented seems tending to extinction ; it has at any rate become of less and less account in politics. But even if it should, by some miracle, regain something of its old importance, it can hardly occupy its old position. There may be room in the future for the Tory magnate of the older kind ; but the Whig aristocrat seems to be gone for ever. In the Nineties, though somewhat decayed, he was still powerful. The Home Rule split had robbed the Liberals of many great names, but there were still a few old Whig Peers, and the very fact of their diminished numbers added to their influence in the Party. Among these great nobles there was none who stood higher than John Poyntz, Earl Spencer. His adhesion to Home

Rule was for many the greatest argument in its favour, the more especially because he had shown during his term of office in Ireland that he could be relentlessly firm in upholding authority and making war on crime.

Even those most bitterly opposed to the policy, and most disdainful of men who had turned when Mr. Gladstone said " turn," had to pause when they reached, on the list of noble Home Rulers, the name of Earl Spencer. For he was, in truth, the last man to be influenced either by vague sentiment, or by those calculations of personal profit and loss which so often determine the course of a politician. His mind was solid and rather prosaic, and his parts were not quick, but he had in a rather special degree the sort of " horse sense " for which the Duke of Devonshire was distinguished—the sense which acts as a brake rather than as a motive power. It was a thoroughly English mind, with all its limitations and much of its strength, and it was none the less strong because it found a considerable difficulty in expression. Lord Spencer was a very bad speaker ; if he had had even an ordinary degree of command over words he would almost certainly have succeeded Mr. Gladstone as Prime Minister. But he never got beyond the fluency necessary to any man who has to take a part in public business ; the coining of a phrase was beyond him, and though he could make a point well enough in debate, he was quite destitute of power over a popular audience. The fact, however, increased rather than diminished his influence over a certain minority, and he was undoubtedly the most powerful counter-poise on the Home Rule side to the weight of the Duke of Devonshire. His character and position, of course, helped. He was not, like the head of the House of Cavendish, indifferent to politics ; he had ambitions, and would have been glad to satisfy them. But he was wholly free from

EARL SPENCER.

one set of weaknesses, and far above one set of temptations. He had a constitutional disdain for the kind of tricks to which some great nobles descend in their avarice of power, while his high rank and great possessions secured him against the temptations of mere avarice of place.

In Earl Spencer, indeed, the Whig noble was seen at not far from his best, and it was not difficult for those who knew him to understand why the Whiggish oligarchy so long held its own in this country. It was not in the smallest degree "democratic." No men ever more hated democracy, no men ever fought more successfully against democracy, than the Whigs. Burke, for example, regarded the "swinish multitude" very much as an old Greek might have regarded the slave population of his time. But there was also the same sort of equality between the Whigs as that which existed between the free citizens of the ancient world. They played their part on a high stage, and indulged an unmitigated contempt for those who were on the ground. But once a man was admitted to this jealous society he was given the full freedom of it. He was admitted as an equal, and not as a lackey. It was thus that Whiggism was able to command the services of great intellects. It was thus that almost all great history was for many years written in most unfair glorification of Whigs. It was this liberality that long permitted Whiggism to be as illiberal as it liked in other matters. Toryism was less wise. It tended to treat intellect as a common thing meant for common use. The priggish and mediocre Addison was made a Whig Secretary of State. The great Swift got an Irish Deanery. Macaulay died a Peer, and lives as a classic. The men who (less efficiently, it is true) did for Toryism the work Macaulay did for Whiggism were unmarked in their lives and forgotten in their deaths. The Tory philosopher was

treated as a valet, and consequently few men above the mentality of the valet became Tory philosophers. The tradition on both sides weakened as the years went on. The Whig Peer of the Nineties would have sniffed at much of the company at Holland House. The Tory Peer of the Nineties would have considered Mr. Lecky an extremely respectable man, worthy of some sort of place at his dinner-table, even on an important night. But we have only to think of the long, sincere, and equal friendship between Earl Spencer and John Morley to be reminded of the great difference between the parties. There were writers on the Tory side not inferior in intellect and scholarship to the son of the Blackburn doctor. Some of them, possibly, were more fitted for active political life. But none of them was ever considered in competition with those "claims which cannot be ignored." It was not until Mr. Chamberlain joined a Conservative Cabinet that a young man like Sir Alfred Milner, with nothing but his brains to recommend him, caught the eye of a colleague of the Cecils.

It was not only that the Whig magnate was ready to admit any sufficiently able man to the freedom of his circle. He habitually showed also the rare magnanimity—or rare sagacity—of submitting to the domination of men whom he had made, and men who could never, without his acquiescence, have entered into serious competition with himself. Disraeli was almost the solitary instance of the middle-class man rising to supreme position in Toryism, and that triumph was achieved by a patient contempt of slight and sneer, of haughty superiority and mean ingratitude, which could be only possible to a very exceptional nature. On the other side, one man after another of no great wealth or birth swayed Cabinets consisting largely of great lords. Earl Spencer's loyalty to Mr. Gladstone is highly typical of the tradition. He formed and maintained sturdily

his own views on matters he felt himself competent to judge, and indeed it was his stubbornness in the matter of the Navy Estimates that led to his old chief finally relinquishing office. But if the positions had been more than reversed, if he had possessed Mr. Gladstone's splendid powers and his own ample patrimony and patrician prestige, he could not have looked for more devoted or more disinterested service than he gave, or for a more complete absence of personal self-seeking or disloyal intrigue.

Earl Spencer, indeed, carried almost to excess the disposition to subordinate his personal feelings to considerations of party welfare. He was assailed, during his Irish period, by the foulest slanders and the most furious invective. All unmoved, he proceeded, within the law, but also with the full vigour of the law, to suppress the murder gang which in the early Eighties almost threatened the dissolution of Irish society. His dealing with the Invincibles was a model for the imitation of all statesmen responsible for the restoration of law and order in a distracted country. He aimed at nothing but what it was clearly his duty to compass, and what he aimed at he struck dead, with the slow but inexorable certainty of a fate. In the performance of this duty nothing moved him. But when it was all over, and he had followed his party in their conversion from the policy of coercion to the policy of concession, he appeared on the same platforms with the men who had formerly assailed him with groundless slander and measureless abuse. This magnanimity, which his critics called rather a carelessness of personal dignity, was characteristic of the man, and we might almost say of the Whig in the man. He could not have felt pleasure in the " union of hearts." But he was ruled by the almost instinctive Whiggish subordination of private feeling to public (or at lowest to party) interest.

The Whig could be, and often was, extraordinarily covetous. He could be, and often was, more solicitous concerning his party than his country, or, rather, he was too much accustomed to think of the prosperity of his party as identical with that of his country. But he was, generally speaking, loyal to his ideas and to the institutions which stood for his ideas, and he understood, better than his opponents, what it meant to play for a side. Whigs quarrelled fiercely among themselves after the enemy was beaten; before a still formidable foe they possessed a rare instinct of discipline. So long as the nineteenth-century Liberal Party was mainly Whiggish it was mainly victorious; and it was no merely reactionary inspiration which made Whiggism regard Radicalism as on the whole a deadlier enemy than Toryism; the Radical was not so much a rebel against the social scheme as against the Party Whip. Whiggism would probably have conquered Radicalism and continued to give its own impress to the Party but for the Home Rule split. But that convulsion left so few great Whig families on the Liberal side that the influence of those who remained was chiefly personal. So long as men like Earl Spencer lived they were able to preserve to some extent the character of the Party. But they left no successors. Nothing is more remarkable than the dying out of political talent among the landed classes during the last twenty years; and it is perhaps not altogether fanciful to connect it with the decline of the Whigs, who, in their palmy days, not only maintained themselves in full efficiency, but acted as a sort of pace-maker for their opponents. The Whig nobility was never numerically in a majority, but it commanded the greater part of aristocratic talent, and it created a certain spirit of emulation among young Tories. But when the Whigs went over to the Tory Party this stimulus was wanting. There was really no need for any strenuous contest

of wits in the Upper House ; still less was there any necessity for Party discipline. No doubt henceforward existed as to the result of a party division, and though it might be desirable to justify by argument the course decided by numbers, no case is likely to be either attacked or defended with full vigour and acuteness when the speaker knows that no single vote will be affected by his eloquence or his logic.

The House of Lords, it is true, is still by no means destitute of ability and experience in public affairs : in many respects it has degenerated less than the elective chamber. But the qualities which make men pre-eminent in counsel and debate are now almost a monopoly of Peers who have served in the House of Commons or in high places under the Crown. Further, the cadets of the noble houses show an increasing disinclination to enter politics, and a decreasing ability to satisfy such ambitions even when they are present. Glance at the personnel of the present Government, compare it with any Government of the nineteenth century, and the first thing to strike one is the political decline of the historic families. If the Liberal Party alone were affected, the fact might be attributed to the mere advance of opinion in that Party. But on the whole the Liberals retain more distinguished men of old family than the Conservatives. The House of Lords was never more of one complexion. There never was a Tory majority in the Commons so large and so compact. Yet those very critics on the Tory side who are for ever urging that the real Tories should show their strength are forced ruefully to admit that from both Houses it would be difficult to pick a Government of indubitable orthodoxy which should also be a Government of reasonable efficiency. Territorial Toryism has almost suffered the fate of those ancient monsters which, in a world of which they

were unchallenged masters, developed such bulk and inertia as actually to die of over-weight and under-intelligence. In this case the intelligence has not exactly died : it has been diverted to other things. In the old days the ordinary course of a young man was first to take up politics as a game, and then to adopt it as a vocation. The game lost interest when the sides became grotesquely unequal, and the vocation is no longer felt.

A man like Earl Spencer is, therefore, not merely rare in present-day politics ; he is almost unknown. The Peers who still take an interest in the affairs of the nation are not territorial, but rather urban and even suburban Peers. That, as in the case of Lord Curzon, they may occasionally be able to boast great descent is not to the point ; their tastes are those of the town and not of the shire. They are not likely, like Walpole, to open their huntsman's or gamekeeper's letters before attending to official correspondence. It is true that the sort of man Earl Spencer was—and he was once the ordinary type of great lord in politics—is still to be found, but you shall hardly find him in affairs. And he has, perhaps, a little coarsened ; he has grown too horsey, and lost his old taste for things of the mind. Earl Spencer was Master of the Pytchley, and astonished John Morley by the zest with which he set out on a fourteen-mile drive to the meet on a pouring wet morning, after being up half the night talking politics. But he was also the owner of a great library which he was perfectly able to appreciate—a library with which he parted, not in order to make money, but simply because he felt that such priceless books should be at the public disposal.

The great Whig nobles of a former generation were, even the greatest of them, by no means beyond criticism. They often took a selfish view of public questions. They often lacked imagination and sym-

pathy. They were many of them most complacent pagans. Most were quite horribly calm over things like the Irish famine and the industrial shames of Great Britain. But it is not easy to point to any age or country which afforded better examples than the best of them of the cultivated mind in the sound body, of powers mental and physical carried to their highest pitch of development, of refined virility and calm strength. And of the type Earl Spencer was not the least worthy representative.

CHAPTER XXIII

SIR H. M. STANLEY

SIR HENRY MORTON STANLEY made a double appeal to the imagination of the early Nineties. He represented both the old romance of adventurous travel and the new romance of mechanical efficiency. It was his luck to do considerable things exactly at the time when exploration had become scientific, but had not ceased to be picturesque. A generation before there was glamour, but little good business, in the conquest of the wild ; on the whole the betting was decidedly on the wild. A generation later the glamour had largely departed, though the business was very good business indeed. But in the high and palmy days of Stanley the explorer had the best of both worlds. He was admired as a disinterested knight errant, and rewarded handsomely for not being one.

To-day the public is a little cynical on the whole subject. It is not so much that the world has grown smaller ; the world is still a very large place. It is not so much that danger has been eliminated ; it has in some ways been notably increased. But the very completeness of a modern exploration boom defeats part of its purpose. So far as it sets out to make the restless hero an efficient money-maker for himself and others it generally succeeds mightily. So far as it sets out to make the restless hero a demigod it invariably fails ; it makes him, instead, something very like a bore. The public reads all about book rights, serial rights, cinema rights, oxy-hydrogen

lecture rights. It reads all about the restless hero's wife, the restless hero's child, the restless hero's mother, the restless hero's schoolmaster, until it begins to be thoroughly tired with the restless hero even before he has started for the North Pole or the South, for some unpleasant range of mountains or some still more unpleasant expanse of swamps. This fatigue, of course, does not prevent much enthusiasm when the restless hero returns, particularly if he fails interestingly to do what he said he was going to do ; the public is apt to be calmer if he succeeds to the foot of the letter. This enthusiasm means nothing in particular. The public will always consent to be worked up into a due state of frenzy over a returning hero ; merely the chance of a " rag " is for great numbers of mysteriously constituted people too precious to miss. But the restless hero will deceive himself if he takes this worship too seriously ; the public will equally worship any American cinema actor. Neither the hero nor the cinema actor, however, will be allowed to become, as of old, the " lion of the season." The modern public may be silly in choosing its idols. It shows common sense in throwing them aside the very moment they cease to amuse.

In the Nineties there was already visible a good deal of this modern tendency to get crazes very badly and tire of them very quickly. But the " lion of the season " still existed, and Stanley, on his return from the Emin Pasha relief expedition, was a lion indeed. It is curious, at this time of day, to recall the origin of this, the last of Stanley's great marches through the African wild. One Edouard Schnitzer, known as Emin Pasha, had been stranded in Equatorial Africa after the capture of Khartoum by the Mahdi. Why any large body of Englishmen should have been interested in this man it is not easy to say. But towards the end of 1886 there was a considerable agitation for an expedition to discover the fate of

Emin, and (if he proved to be alive) to rescue him. Who better for this task than Stanley, " the man who found Livingstone " ? There was no better-known story than that of Stanley and Livingstone. Every child was familiar with the woodcut of two men—one in a sun-helmet, the other in a cap—each with his adoring bevy of blacks, shaking hands with each other ; underneath was printed Stanley's " Dr. Livingstone, I presume." Every magazine reader of more mature years knew the whole story—how James Gordon Bennett, of the *New York Herald*, " a tall, fierce-eyed, and imperious-looking young man," saw Stanley in Paris, and told him to " find Livingstone." Expenses ? " Never mind about expenses. When you have spent your first ten thousand, draw on me for another ten thousand. When that is gone, draw on me for another ; when that is gone, draw on me for another ; draw what you like, but find Livingstone." That was the story in its perfect dramatic form ; the real story was a little different. Bennett told Stanley to go, but no terms were actually settled, and the explorer, who had already " made good " as a newspaper correspondent for Bennett in Abyssinia, found no money for him at Zanzibar, and had actually to contract a loan from the United States Consul there. But naturally the ideal account of the transaction obtained full currency. The nineteenth century had a pathetic faith in its Press, and even in the American Press ; and it revelled in the vision of one strong, silent man, by the power of a mighty banking account, hurling a second strong, silent man across a dark continent to the succour of a third strong, silent man. These things no longer thrill ; there are so many men now still stronger and more silent, so many banking accounts still more mighty. But to Victorian civilisation the romance of millionaire whims was yet enchanting ; and James Gordon Bennett, though he persisted in living to be an

oddity, never quite lost the splendour of his " find Livingstone " heroism.

As for Stanley himself, the expedition covered him with enduring glory. Every British boy born in the late Sixties and Seventies was familiar with his haggard but resolute features, and knew by heart the singular story of his life. It was the kind of story that impresses itself indelibly on the imagination of youth. Stanley's name, of course, came to him only in mature life. He was born John Rowlands, the son of a farmer near Denbigh. His father he never knew ; during his childhood he only saw his mother once, in the workhouse of St. Asaph, whither she had come with two other of her children ; she would not recognise him, and when, after his first return from America, he paid her a visit, it was only to meet with a cold repulse. John Rowlands had been left as an infant in charge of his grandfather, Moses Parry, then living within the precincts of Denbigh Castle. On the death of this old man he was transferred to the care of an ancient couple, two of his uncles guaranteeing a maintenance allowance of five shillings a week. This at last failed, and the child was taken to the St. Asaph Union Workhouse ; he was then in his sixth year. Young Rowlands in these dismal surroundings suffered all the pangs possible to a boy of keen sensibilities and strong natural affections who finds himself the victim, not only of privation and humiliation, but of actual tyranny. His schoolmaster was a one-handed monster named Francis, who seems to have been as bad as anybody in Dickens. " No Greek helot or dark slave," says Stanley in his Autobiography, " ever underwent discipline as the boys of St. Asaph under the heavy, masterful hand of James Francis. The ready backslap in the face, the stunning clout over the ear, the strong blow with the open palm on alternate cheeks, which knocked our senses into confusion, were so

frequent that it was a marvel that we ever recovered them again. Whatever might be the nature of the offence, or merely because his irritable mood required vent, our poor heads were cuffed and slapped and pounded until we were speechless and streaming with blood. But, though a tremendously rough and reckless striker with his fist or hand, such blows were preferable to deliberate punishment with the birch, ruler, or cane, which with cool malice he inflicted. . . . If a series of errors were discovered in our lessons, then a vindictive scourging of the offender followed until he was exhausted or our lacerated bodies could bear no more."

It is a testimony to the toughness of child nature, though none to the management of this brutal institution, that of Stanley's thirty school-fellows one lived to be a wealthy merchant, another to be a clergyman, a third to be a colonial lawyer, and a fourth to become a man of large fortune overseas. But the iron entered deeply into young Rowlands' soul, and the most constant motive in his life was to obliterate the stigma of pauperism. His connection with the workhouse abruptly terminated when he was about fifteen. He turned on the brutal master, gave him a severe thrashing, ran away, got first a place as a pupil teacher, then worked as a farm-boy, a haberdasher's boy, and a butcher's boy, until at last, at Liverpool, he obtained a job on an American sailing-ship. At New Orleans, tired of the brutality he had experienced in a voyage of eighty-three days, he ran away from the ship, and the same day chanced across the man who was to become his adopted father, a Mr. Stanley, who, once some sort of minister, was now a commercial traveller. No more striking tribute has ever been paid to the influence of American institutions than that of the ex-workhouse lad from England. " The people I passed," he says, " appeared to me nobler than any I had seen. They had a swing

of the body wholly un-English, and their facial expressions differed from those I had been accustomed to. I strove to give a name to what was so unusual. Now, of course, I know that it was the sense of equality and independence that made each face so different from what I had seen in Liverpool. These people knew no master, and had no more awe of their employers than they had of their fellow-employees." At the same time he could not help feeling " a little contempt " for the extreme touchiness which was the defect of these high qualities. In a few weeks he had himself acquired a good deal of the American spirit ; the servile taint was eradicated ; and the temper and aptitudes which had been so long suppressed expanded in the " felicities of freedom."

Mr. Stanley soon after lost his wife—whom young Rowlands describes as having taught him " the immense distance between a lady and a mere woman." This bereavement induced him to adopt the young Englishman, and he performed the ceremony in due form, filling a basin with water and baptizing the erstwhile John Rowlands as Henry Morton Stanley. " The golden period of my life," says Stanley, " began from that supreme moment." For the first time in his life he had a proper outfit of clothes, and was introduced to the amenities of civilised life. But his adopted father did not long survive, and in the meantime the Civil War, in which Stanley saw service on both sides, had broken out. When peace was declared, Stanley, who had suffered extraordinary vicissitudes of fortune, took advantage of a chance introduction to the New York Press to embark on the career of free-lance journalism. His great chance as a war correspondent came with the Abyssinian War. Gordon Bennett thought American interest in Abyssinia too slight to justify the expense of a special correspondent, but agreed to pay for any matter accepted if Stanley cared to defray his

own charges. Stanley agreed to this discouraging proposal, and by good luck and management gave the *New York Herald* the first news of the capture of Magdala and the fall of King Theodore. The Livingstone adventure followed, and he was a made man. Livingstone, when found, was content to remain where he was, and there were some wicked people who suggested that so far from Stanley discovering Livingstone, it was Livingstone who discovered Stanley. But, though the wound of such injurious suggestion rankled for many years, Stanley fully established himself both with the geographers and the general public. His expedition across Africa in 1870—he had just before accompanied Sir Garnet Wolseley on the Ashanti campaign—raised, however, some controversy as to his methods ; he was charged with harshness to his men, with keeping aloof from his officers, and with employing slaves. Such criticisms, which had more or less followed all Stanley's feats, were specially loud after the first enthusiasm over the success of the Emin Pasha expedition had died down. It was successful in much the same sense as the finding of Livingstone. Emin Pasha was found, but he did not at first want to be rescued ; and when, a little later, he had trouble with his Egyptian officers and elected to return with Stanley to the coast, he promptly went over to the Germans, whose service he entered. This fact, the other fact that Stanley failed to see any fault in Emin's conduct, and the further fact of the massacre of Stanley's rearguard, which he had virtually abandoned in order to push on to Emin, rapidly cooled the great explorer's popularity. There soon began a bitter controversy over the fate of the rearguard. Stanley, in attacking his critics, assailed the memory of Major Barttelot, who had been left in charge of the ill-fated party. His critics retorted with a charge of carelessness and mismanagement,

and the effect of this wrangle was to throw a good deal of light on Stanley's methods.

The natives of the Lower Congo gave him a name which signified " Breaker of Rocks," and in doing so proved themselves no mean judges of character. Stanley was not a cruel man nor an unprincipled, and Sir Garnet Wolseley has spoken of his high courage and unruffled calm in positions of danger. But he was not in the position of a soldier in charge of a military expedition ; he acted only occasionally in a quasi-military capacity ; more often he travelled as a civilian, and sometimes as in every sense a private person. This circumstance he seems to have overlooked. " My methods," he said, in expressing the hope that it would be his to follow Livingstone in opening up Africa to the " shining light of Christianity," " will not be Livingstone's. Each man has his own way. His, I think, had its defects, though the old man personally had been almost Christ-like for goodness, patience, and self-sacrifice. The selfish and wooden-headed world requires mastering as well as loving charity ; for man is a composite of the spiritual and earthly." We have here the sharp contrast between the earlier and later nineteenth-century schools of exploration, the school of the gospel and the school of the gatling gun. Stanley had his own conception of religion ; in his way he was a decidedly pious man ; his workhouse wretchedness had inclined him to seek the Father of the fatherless ; he had resumed in later life the prayerful habits of his boyhood, and he devoted some considerable time in his first trans-African tour to converting a ruling chief to Christianity. But there was more of Calvin than of Christ in his faith, and more of the Old Testament than the New.

With the completion of the Emin Pasha expedition he retired on his laurels, married, and went into politics. But, though after a first unsuccessful

attempt he got himself returned for North Lambeth, he quickly found how hard is the political path of an elderly man who has achieved distinction in other walks. He could not get into Parliamentary ways, and even when he spoke on subjects he perfectly understood he had the usual vice of the " man on the spot." He could not help lecturing, and lecturing is one of the things the House of Commons will not tolerate. If the House did not think too well of him, he certainly thought exceedingly ill of the House. He describes it as " a gigantic apparatus for frittering away energy and time." No politician claimed his undiluted admiration ; curiously enough, Mr. (now Lord) Haldane came nearest to his notion of a capable and earnest man. It was the old quarrel of the man of action with the place of talk—a matter on which, as on most, there are things to be said on both sides.

One curious thing may be recalled concerning him. He was often to be seen at public dinners. But nobody ever saw him eat anything ; every dish went away untasted.

CHAPTER XXIV

JUSTIN McCARTHY

I FIRST met Justin McCarthy in the schoolroom of a little Gloucestershire village. It was during the short-lived "union of hearts" between the General Election of 1886 and the general upset which followed the Parnell divorce case. Justin McCarthy was appearing on the platform of a popular county member of that time, one Arthur Brend Winterbotham, a fine specimen of the more hearty type of middle-class Liberal. Winterbotham had the reputation of a shrewd man of business; he was a Stroud Valley weaver in a highly comfortable way. But on the platform one would imagine that he had no thought but for the People—"the People, Lord, the People, not Crowns, not Kings, but Men"; to use one of his favourite quotations. In politics he was a perfect Lawrence Boythorne of a man, irresistible in his frank good-humour; his silence was one expansive smile, and his speaking one melodious roar. His strong and splendid voice had a wonderful trick of falling when he spoke of the tears Liberalism intended to dry if it could only get hold of an official pocket-handkerchief; it vibrated with splendid scorn when he exposed the democratic pretences of the Tories. He was never more effective than when reading a newspaper extract; he seemed to be able to impart the dignity of Isaiah to something in the *Daily News*. To hear him quote an enemy's speech, and add, "'Loud cheers,' gentlemen! The newspaper says 'loud cheers'—but were they the cheers of agricultural labourers?" was a liberal education

in platform style. And each of his chins—he had a number—was worth hundreds of votes.

On this occasion he gave a real rousing speech on Ireland. He remarked several times that his blood boiled. His voice trembled when he spoke of evictions. It rose to bugle tones when he denounced Mr. Balfour's " bayonets and battering rams." He spoke of Home Rule as the one great Liberal policy. And then the Chairman called on Mr. Justin McCarthy with a certain embarrassment, as if he had an idea that he was a celebrity of some kind, but did not quite know his claim to fame (which was probably the fact), as " one who had fought and suffered for the cause of tortured Erin." And Mr. Justin McCarthy, a gentle-mannered little man, with timid, spectacled eyes, a scholar's diffidence, and one of those beards which give the impression that their purpose is less to advertise virility than to conceal a feminine softness which might be too apparent with a clean-shaved face, delivered, without a gesture or an exaggeration, the most moderate speech I have ever heard on the Irish question. It had no perceptible effect, except that the blacksmith in the back benches, who had fiercely interrupted Mr. Winterbotham—he was a Tory, as became a shoer of the horses of the nobility and gentry—began to snore heavily about half-way through. But, whenever I have since heard people talk about the emotional and unreasonable Irishman, and the strong, passionless, unsentimental Englishman, I have always seen in my mind's eye the strenuous Gloucestershire cloth-weaver and the mild Irish scholar side by side. And I have never been able to acquit the English Liberal of those days of a great responsibility. It was not, perhaps, wholly his fault. Assuredly he meant no harm. But he did nevertheless a mighty evil. His well-intended sentimentalities were taken in earnest by an intensely earnest people. Then awkward things

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happened, and it appeared exactly how much clear thought and sincere conviction lay beneath all the loose talk about " living to see the day, when the clouds should pass away, and the sun of freedom shine again on Erin's land." It was seen that Parnell was in essence right—that the Liberals would do exactly what they were forced to do, that when the Irish question was " up," Home Rule would be " practical politics," but that when Ireland was out of the picture, Home Rule would be out of the Liberal programme. On the other hand, the Conservatives, when they promised coercion, invariably fulfilled their promises most conscientiously. So the fatal legend grew up that the English could only be trusted to " deliver the goods " when they took the form of handcuffs.

Englishmen often think of the Southern Irishman as a clever child. I will not discuss that view. But those who held it would have been wise to consider how logical children are in their own way, what an awful sense they have of the nature of a bargain, how hard it is to restore their faith when once shattered. You and I may quite easily forget that we have promised wide-eyed innocence, aged five, an elephant for Christmas. But wide-eyed innocence will not forget the fact, or accept our lame explanations that we really could not get the elephant, because some still wider-eyed innocence had thrown itself on the floor and screamed till it was black at the mere suggestion of such a present. Half the Irish trouble is this exaggerated logicality on the part of the Irishman, child or no child, and this happy-go-lucky, hand-to-mouth spirit of compromise and procrastination on the part of the undeniably mature and businesslike Englishman. We, as a practical people, seldom set our hands to a business document without intending to carry it out. But we have a nasty habit of signing intellectual promissory notes without the

smallest idea of meeting them. When it is a question of money, our undertaking to pay "this first of exchange" in ninety days is the best security of the kind in the world. But an English Minister will cheerfully say, "We are all Socialists now," or tell Labour to be "audacious," or speak in favour of nationalisation of the coal mines, or give his "personal pledge" that food shall not cost more, without the smallest sense of responsibility. Now, the Irish are not the best people in the world with whom to do money business; but they do take ideas seriously. And if they have been promised an elephant, they expect an elephant. It is no use arguing with them that the elephant would be a white elephant, that an elephant in Ireland would not be nearly so well suited to the bogs as a stork, that so dangerous a brute is no fit plaything for children of the flighty Celtic temperament. They keep repeating (with some passion) that an elephant they have been promised, that an elephant they will have, and that they won't be happy (or let anyone else be) until they get it. And they become noisier than ever when told that they "only do it to annoy," and that everybody knows the last thing they really want is the elephant.

I have chosen Justin McCarthy, from a knot of Irishmen who occupied a considerable place in the politics of the Nineties, because he seems to me a figure worth the study of those Englishmen who are inclined in their haste to dismiss Irish agitation as an insincere and artificial thing. There could hardly have lived a man less inclined by nature for the rough-and-tumble of politics. His every instinct was literary. A good library satisfied almost every craving except that for an occasional quiet little dinner with people capable of talking interestingly about Shakespeare and the musical glasses. His love of humane learning was proclaimed at an age when

the ordinary boy of his position—he was born in "genteel poverty" which grew in poverty and lost in gentility as his easy-going dilettante father, who had occupied the post of clerk to the Cork City magistrates, came down in the world—was chiefly engaged with marbles and whip-top. "We were nearly all poor," he says of his school set, "but we all belonged to families in which education counted for much, and where scholarly studies found encouragement. . . . We could read our Latin and make something of our Greek, most of us could read French, some few Italian, and many of us were taking to the study of German."

It was natural that a lad whose own degree in such a circle is indicated by Lord Moulton's statement that "McCarthy was the best all-round scholar he knew" should drift into the literary career. Long before he was twenty McCarthy, on whom the support of the family now depended, was working as a reporter on the staff of the *Cork Examiner* at a salary of £1 a week. But Irish journalism was then—possibly still is—too hungry a business to detain long an ambitious and capable man, and it was not many years before McCarthy left it behind. Establishing himself first in Liverpool and afterwards in London, he soon attained a certain position in the republic of letters. In 1868 he went to America, had considerable success, and was told, by one who had power behind him, that he might have the post of United States Minister to London if he would remain and be naturalised. By this time, however, he had decided that his main business in life was to work for Irish Nationalism, and he decided that this could be better done as a British subject.

In 1879 he was returned for Longford, and shortly after was elected Vice-Chairman of the Nationalist Party. He entered the House of Commons with a "profound respect" for its constitution and history.

Unlike those Irishmen who saw in the House only an alien instrument of oppression, he had always regarded it as a " powerful agency in the development of constitutional and religious equality," and his " main desire " in public life was " to see the establishment of such an institution in Ireland for the government of the Irish people by the Irish people." The vision of Irish independence never floated before his mind's eye ; he was content with " a compromise which should give to Ireland the entire management and control of her own legislation while she yet remained a member of the British Imperial system." That there was perfect sincerity in these professions may be inferred, not only from the character of Justin McCarthy's public career, but from the tone of his *History of Our Own Time*. An English Unionist might possibly be as fair in writing a history of Ireland ; probably he would not. But it would be miraculous if such a man could dwell on the deeds of Sarsfield with enthusiasm equal to that which inspires Justin McCarthy in paying tribute to the splendours of the British Army. But this same man, with his gentle and peace-loving nature, took his part in the drudgery of obstruction under Parnell, and had his turn in being " suspended." " It was not very pleasant work," he admits, " for one who had been for more than a quarter of a century a resident of England, and had formed many very close friendships and some relationship there, and had been doing his best to win for himself a position in English literature and journalism." But, however unpleasant it might be, every Irish member had to take his fair share in the work of obstruction ; and he did it knowing that it was only a means to an end. Under the leadership of Isaac Butt an Irish night had been simply a Scottish night with a brogue. Obstruction forced the Irish question on the attention of the English people.

Just before the Parnell divorce suit came to shatter so many things, McCarthy had come to believe that the main trouble was over, and that, in his own words, " an Irish Nationalist member was henceforward to be a welcome associate in the great progressive work of English politics." But the Liberal conversion, like all wholesale conversions, was not much more than skin-deep. At the best it was a conversion of sentiment ; at the worst a conversion of expediency. There was a good-natured acquiescence on the part of the rank-and-file, an acquiescence not always good-natured on the part of the subordinate leaders. Mr. Gladstone was in earnest ; one or two of his lieutenants were in earnest ; the party generally was like the Roman masses under Constantius and Julian, ready to deride the gods or stone the saints as the people in authority wished. The foundations of the policy were laid in sand, and it could not stand the stress of the storm caused by the O'Shea divorce suit.

It was a curious example of the irony of circumstance that brought the cold and silent Parnell into conflict with the genial and chatty man of letters who had been hitherto his devoted factotum. But when the issue was joined McCarthy showed that he also could be inflexible. Parnell bitterly described him, on his election as chief of the Nationalist Party, as " just the man for a tea-party," and assuredly he was the last person to enjoy an atmosphere of vendetta. But, while it was a " cruel stroke of fate " that compelled him to stand forth as the opponent of Parnell and John Redmond, his resolution was firm from the moment that Parnell issued the manifesto which he believed would be fatal, unless counteracted, to the Home Rule cause. And if it was ironical that McCarthy should be pitted against Parnell, it was still more ironical that Parnell should be defeated by McCarthy ; that he was defeated was made evident some time before his stormy career ended.

But the struggle was scarcely less disastrous to the victor. Writing was McCarthy's only means of living, and the demands on his time made writing difficult. His work for Ireland, moreover, involved him in serious financial loss, and when he resigned the chairmanship he was virtually ruined both in health and estate. His last years were spent in invalidism in Westgate, with the pressure of want driving his tired brain and enfeebled physique to a too copious output of novels, historical studies, and newspaper articles. An act of political generosity on Mr. Balfour's part at length lightened the burden, and from 1903 to his death in 1912 he enjoyed a Civil List pension of £250 a year. McCarthy was greatly touched by this tribute from one whom he had consistently attacked. But the attacks, however trenchant, had never been marked by a tone of personal bitterness. That was not in McCarthy's nature. But for the cursed spite of politics he could never have indulged a more serious quarrel than those which arise between amiable scholars over a disputed reading or a historical doubt. And even in politics he could combine perfect firmness of principle with a certain large charity. Nothing further from the stage Irishman of English fancy could be imagined than the modest and agreeable man of letters, courtly after the older manner, soft in step and gentle in voice, with only a slight and agreeable trace of brogue, who was so often to be met with at all sorts of neutral dinner-tables during the Nineties. But he was in his way as indomitable an Irish Nationalist as any of those unhappy fellow-countrymen whose death on the scaffold it was his mournful duty as a historian to chronicle. His sacrifices would have been little felt had the cause triumphed to which he devoted the best years of life; things being as they were, he could not but think that talents which might have given him a

much higher rank in literature had been frittered away in a great futility.

It is only necessary to compare the Irish Nationalist represented—at the best, it is true—by Justin McCarthy with the Irish Nationalist represented to-day by "President" de Valera in order to realise the mischief wrought rather by levity than ill intent. The impotence of the Nationalist Party in the Nineties made it a negligible ally and a negligible enemy, and both English Parties hastened to forget that there was an Irish question. Thus the opportunity of a settlement in the absence of agitation passed, and when, with restored Irish unity, a new demand arose, the atmosphere was in the nature of things unfavourable to statesmanlike handling. The "Union of Hearts," had it been a real thing, might well have worked a cure for Irish ills. Being in the main an unreal thing, it but added to Irish embitterment. And to-day we know the greatness of our gain.

CHAPTER XXV

LORD LEIGHTON AND G. F. WATTS

THE Nineties were rich in painters of all kinds. People bought pictures then, and all sorts of pictures ; in those days of still happy and careless barbarism there was no veto on any school, and one could hang things of almost any school in almost any surroundings. The influence of the Prince Consort was not altogether dead, and people unashamedly admired the picture with a story, as well as the portrait with a likeness. So the older-school painters were still for the most part extremely comfortable. Herkomer and the other standard portrait painters covered acres of canvas annually ; Alma-Tadema brought yearly an extra polish to his marbles ; the silver birch of MacWhirter put forth fresh leaves every spring ; " Derby Day " Frith survived, and even did some little work, to remind the world of the brave days of victorious sentimentalism ; at Christie's, Goodall, Maclise, and Landseer still won the dealers' respect ; J. C. Horsley, protesting against the nude, was only mildly laughed at as " Clothes-Horsley." Millais, cured of his pre-Raphaelite enthusiasms, was now more of the old gang than the new. But Mr. Sargent, the Sandow of the brush, proved that the public was by no means illiberal ; it was just as much pleased to be artistically hit between the eyes as to be tickled. Whistler, still unaccountably reckoned by many a mere fop—so strong was the influence of a Ruskin yet in the flesh—was busy making cloudy masterpieces and clear-cut enmities, and a whole

(From a portrait by J. McLure Hamilton.)

LORD LEIGHTON.

school of morbidity danced in grisly sort round the early tomb of Beardsley.

If among all the considerable painters of the Nineties I distinguish Leighton and Watts, it is not because I think them possessed of the greatest talents, or even the most interesting personalities, but because they seem between them to represent rather specially what sharply marked off the art then passing away from what has taken its place. Both were very much of the nineteenth century in the largeness of their ideas and their sense of the importance of their mission. In many ways there could have been no two men, and no two craftsmen, more distinct. Both were picturesque and stately figures. Both had features cast in the noblest mould ; the grand-ducal geniality of Leighton was not less impressive in its kind than the frozen though gentle austerity of Watts. In any circle each took quite naturally a commanding position—Leighton as a kind of king, Watts as a kind of priest. Each was at bottom shy, though both were immovable in their opinions in any company. But spiritually they were so utterly unlike that the one served as a foil to the other. When they were together—they were early friends, and the friendship lasted till the end of Leighton's life—they might have served as models for an allegory after Watts's own heart. Leighton was the epicurean, Watts the stoic. Leighton represented the world at its gracefullest, Watts the travail of the spirit. Of Leighton it might be said that he would have been a better painter could he have thought of something really worth painting. It may certainly be said of Watts that he was at his best when he was under no obligation to decide what was worth painting. His painfully meditated allegories might now be spared without too considerable a pang ; his portraits, simply as documents of the time, could not. But, strongly as they differed in

other ways, both men illustrated in a remarkable degree the curious seriousness and arrogance characteristic of the Victorians. Leighton conceived that the painter should be very much of the gentleman. Watts conceived that the painter should be very much of the preacher. Neither felt that he had any affinity to the workman. When I say seriousness, I do not mean that either was a prig ; I only mean that each had a profound conviction that the painting of easel pictures is an immensely important thing, whereas the painter of to-day of anything like equal stature would be the first to say that, while he paints easel pictures for a living, they are about as important as chocolates, cigars, liqueurs, circulating library novels, and vintage wines—things, that is to say, to titillate individuals rich enough to afford them. When I say arrogance, again, I do not mean that they were vulgarly conceited : Watts revealed a beautiful humility, and Leighton was always bemoaning his inadequacy. But both were full of the notion that the artist is in the world to teach something, if it is only deportment, and should be respected as a teacher. Both would have rebelled against the suggestion that the artist is a workman, and that it is his sole business, as it is any workman's, to make the best use of his material.

It is not to the present purpose to adjudicate between the didactic and the ultra-technical ideas of art ; the question, moreover, is by no means so simple as many of the controversialists have made it ; no Victorian was ever fool enough to believe that bad technique was excused by good ethics, and it may be doubted whether any sane person on the other side ever believed—though some apparently sane persons have occasionally said—that technique is an end in itself. Grant that a painter has essentially the same problem, and is essentially the same kind of craftsman, as the bricklayer ; grant that ethical painting is as absurd as ethical bricklaying, we

are still far from admitting the wilder developments of " art for art's sake." The bricklayer's business, after all, is to build houses for men and styes for pigs, and not simply to play the wizard—or the fool—with his material out of mere joy in his dexterity. So the painter, too, has a task to perform, and if he does not perform it, if he leaves unachieved the main and obvious purpose, then he has failed, whatever incidental miracles he may have performed. The difference between the Victorians and their successors is not to be measured by the stupidest of one age and the maddest of the other. Yet the difference is there, it is really considerable, and it is, I think, in the main the difference between the first and second generation of agnosticism.

The great Victorians were in general agnostics ; Watts certainly was one. They were of an age when every advance in science seemed to confirm the philosophic rationalism of the eighteenth century. But they retained much of the spirit of faith. We have all seen those ingenious advertisements which command us to " watch the letters in red " and then close our eyes. When we obey the advertiser, and do close our eyes, the image of the object is still visible, though we no longer see the object itself. But, if the eyes remain closed for a little while, the image fades completely away. This may serve to represent the difference between the Victorians and ourselves. They were, as a whole, no longer believers in the sense that Dante and Bunyan were believers. But some, while confining themselves by no dogma, still persuaded themselves that they believed, and yet more reverenced still what they would not believe. Dickens represents the one type, Huxley the other. It is very singular to note how in Dickens rationalism jostles with his instinctive respect for the greater Christian dogmas. He talks about " the world that sets this right " as simply as about the world that wants setting right. Yet (as in the case of Joan of

Arc) he is downright angry over people who would suggest that a miracle is possible. When he writes from the heart he accepts as a little child the greatest of all miracles ; when he writes with the head he is as scornful as Voltaire, and scarcely less ribald.

We are conscious of this double mood through most of the nineteenth century, and it explains much of the characteristic Victorian limp. The giants of those days nearly all had one intellectual leg shorter than the other ; in poise they looked majestic, but whenever they got excited the effect was always a little laughable. Thus Carlyle suddenly forgets that he is a sort of Hebrew prophet, and runs after Newman or the Pope, throwing mud, for all the world like a small boy at Portadown. Thus Kingsley, one moment quite big and universal, is the next moment a shrill sectarian. Thus Tennyson descends abrupt from Virgilian grandeur to suburban prejudice. So many of the great Victorians seemed to be really so anxious to believe in God, and so afraid that it was not an advanced thing to believe, that the fear of dogma and the yearning for faith caused them perpetually to wobble. Their attitude to all sorts of questions was one of what may be called violent indecision, and people now seem agreed to call it contemptible. But, whatever it was, it determined the character of nearly all Victorian things, and among them of much Victorian painting.

When men believe seriously they are generally not too serious about their beliefs ; witness the mediæval faith and what seems to us the mediæval profanity. When a man is happily married to a woman, he does not spend his time paying her high-flown compliments; he takes it for granted that she loves him and knows that he loves her. There are exceptions, of course, like Warren Hastings, who in old age called his wife (epistolarily and to herself) " his elegant Marian." There are exceptions also among religious people ;

just as there are some husbands who seem only visitors in their own houses, so there are some saints who are never quite at home in their faith. The rule, however, is that the man who is married to a woman, and the man who is married to a creed, act like spouses and not like sweethearts. But just as usually we may be sure that a man has not quite made up his mind to commit himself to matrimony with a girl if he still treats her with grave gallantry and composes laborious sonnets to her eyebrows, so we are seldom far wrong in assuming that the man who talks too solemnly about the beauty of a creed is already inclined to regard it as a myth. Tennyson, for example, could not have been so ceremonious with Arthur and his knights if he had truly felt them as real people. And if this half-faith tends to an unbalanced solemnity, it inclines a man also to an exaggerated sense of responsibility and to that kind of humility which is really a form of presumption. The man of firm faith realises his own insignificance, and is content to leave much to God. The man of no faith, and no hankering after faith, washes his hand of things in general, and "eats his pudding" without any kind of uneasiness. But the man of half-faith is exceedingly prone to imagine himself consecrated to set everything right, except possibly himself. We, having lost that half-faith of the Victorians, having no longer imprinted on our minds the image of things at one time very real, have little sympathy with their ideals and perplexities, and therefore a very imperfect understanding of their performances. We see their inconsistency of thought and feeling, and do little justice to their honesty of purpose. We sneer at their pomposity, but fail to see that it was the effect of their immense sense of their accountability—to someone or something they were not quite sure about.

In Watts this sense of accountability was a dominating fact ; it is the inner stuff of everything he did.

But even Frederick Leighton, a man of much lighter make, was penetrated with an immensely serious conviction of the importance of the mission of painting in general, and of himself as a painter in particular. Leighton belonged immediately to the upper middle class, but the family was originally noble, and he could trace his descent through the female line to a considerable mediæval family in Shropshire. He was the son and the grandson of a doctor. His grandfather attained such a degree of professional eminence as to gain appointment as Court Physician to the Czar Nicholas, and but for the accident of a delicate constitution his father would have continued in Russian employment. This ill-health, and the consequent necessity for climate-hunting, led to a life of genteel vagrancy, and before Frederick Leighton had reached the age of a fifth-form lad he had seen many countries, and had acquired that fluent command of French, Italian, and German which distinguished him as the best linguist who ever presided over the Royal Academy. His general education was not neglected ; at seventeen he was a good classical scholar, and he used to say afterwards that he then knew more of anatomy than when he became President.

Though his taste for art was early manifested, his father intended him for medicine, and it was with some reluctance that he at last consented to recognise facts, and permit the lad to enter on a course of serious study. In view of the seignorial grace of Leighton's maturity it is a little piquant to find that his style as a young man caused great distress to his mother. " My child," she writes just before his twenty-fourth birthday, " your manners are very faulty, and I am consequently much disappointed. You take so much after me, and my nearest relations had such refined manners, that I made sure you must resemble my father and brothers. There is, however," she adds cheeringly, " nothing whatever to

G. F. WATTS IN HIS STUDIO.

prevent your becoming a gentleman." One is almost tempted to believe that one of the lady's near relatives was Mrs. Nickleby, and another perhaps Mrs. Micawber. She certainly recalls those ladies not only in her excessive reverence for her family, but in her apparent incapacity to come to a clear judgment on the facts before her. For it is impossible to believe that at any time a man so gifted as Leighton could have been boorish : a good profile is generally worth a hundred primers on etiquette.

At twenty-five Leighton exhibited the picture which brought him a sudden fame, the immense canvas of Cimabue's Madonna being carried in triumph through the streets of Florence to the Church of Santa Maria Novella. In the Academy of 1855 this work attracted great attention, and Queen Victoria bought it for the considerable price of six hundred guineas. " A huge thing which everybody talks about," Rossetti describes it ; " the R.A.'s have been gasping for years for someone to back against Hunt and Millais, and here they have him, a fact that makes some people do the picture injustice in return."

The Cimabue was painted in Rome, where the young artist had for some years enjoyed himself in the Bohemian society which Thackeray deals with so happily in *The Newcomes*, qualifying himself for association with hirsute genius by growing a full beard and a " feeble moustache." He now returned to London to make the most of his success. But he showed no eagerness to pass through all the doors obligingly thrown open to him, and it is rather curious that a man who became afterwards so complete a social success incurred resentment on the ground of what was interpreted as a supercilious aloofness. The truth was that his health was not strong, and that he always had to pay dearly for late hours and contact with general society. Indeed, this physical inadequacy was one of the main facts of his life :

devotion to the social duties of the Presidency ultimately killed him, and it is hardly fanciful to suppose that a constitutional lack of vigour was responsible for one feature of his art which must have struck the most casual observer. "I have not and never shall have," he wrote of himself, "enormous power." He put into all his works the very best that was in him; Watts himself was not more conscientious; and among all modern painters there was none more ambitious. He deliberately challenged comparison with the masters of the golden age of Italian art; indeed, Leighton's natural bent was to the grand manner, and in the matter of composition he had a real affinity with the great men he admired. But, apart from unfortunate methods of manipulation learned from his German masters, there was almost always a certain deficiency or a certain exaggeration peculiar to inherent want of power, which must either under-do or over-do.

But if he were not quite a great painter he was certainly a great President. The Academy never had a chief who better looked, spoke, and played the part. By the Nineties his excessive labours as President had told on his never robust health, and for some years he had had warnings of angina pectoris. But nothing would induce him to restrain his activities within the limit which advancing years had inexorably fixed; the life of the valetudinarian was impossible for him. So the round of speeches, dinners, soirées, and receptions, was kept up almost to the last, though the haggard face satirised the light grace of his manner and the rather theatrical showiness of his dress. Leighton had long been a baronet; it was one of the distresses of his life that Watts refused a like honour. On January 1, 1896, he was created a Peer, and twenty-four days later the public learned, with something of a pang, that he was dead. His last spoken words were in German, and there was

some appropriateness in the fact, for no little of German pedantry tinctured his classical enthusiasms. But in character and sentiment he was wholly English, and in nothing more English than in his regrets that one cannot have one's cake and eat it. He achieved a social position never before occupied by a British painter ; he won the worship of innumerable friends ; he did an enormous amount of work at a generally high technical level. Yet, two years before his death, he told a friend, " I have never got what I most wanted in this world." The " what " he did not indicate.

" His was a nature the most beautiful of any I have ever known," was Leighton's epitaph by his friend Watts. Leighton died long before he had become old-fashioned. It was Watts's fate to linger in a world of which he could not possibly have approved. The recluse of Limnerslease—the very name smacks eloquently of the Victorian mood—seemed to those who caught a glimpse of him like some stern old Puritan brooding in retirement over the jiggings and Jezebelisms of the Restoration. The nineteenth-century seriousness which Leighton had, but could put on and off like a garment, was the very soul of Watts ; he was probably the most serious painter who ever lived. That nineteenth-century " cheek " which made Leighton pit himself against all the old masters on their own ground was wildly exaggerated in Watts ; he set himself to paint things which were to be not only the greatest of paintings, but the most powerful of sermons—sermons, too, addressed not to a sect or even a faith, but to the whole human race, now and yet to be. Mr. Chesterton, I think, has remarked in his interesting monograph on Watts that he avoided of set purpose all conventional imagery, from the cross downwards, so that his allegories should have universal appeal, and should be intelligible to the cultured Bantu or Papuan of five thousand years hence who happens to disinter

them from the ruins of the Tate Gallery. The painter who takes his work like that may be, as Watts was, humble as a human individual, but as an artist we can only feel his colossal arrogance.

But this arrogance was the great fact of the time. When I see a Watts picture—I am not speaking of his admirable portraits, but of his didactic allegories —it seems to conjure up, not so much the noble reflections that appear to rise in some other men, but odd memories of all sorts of Victorian things. I think of Kingsley setting out to crush the unbeliever and solve the social problem by writing *Hypatia* and *Alton Locke* ; of Herbert Spencer (when his circulation did not give him too much trouble) confidently measuring the Knowable and the Unknowable with his synthetic inch-tape ; of Browning settling the nature of Providence in an abrupt sentence and then going jollily off to dinner ; of Tennyson dismissing the French nation with a wave of his kingly hand as victims of " red-fool fury " ; of Carlyle hurling thunderbolts at everybody who did not feel like a Scotch peasant or think like a German philosopher. These Victorians were wonderful men and did wonderful things, and we have not earned the right of easy scorn for them and theirs. But in few ages have men, almost all of whom were bewildered in one way or another, been so supremely confident of their power to settle everything. The nineteenth century, in fact, left nearly everything unsettled through that wondrous faith in the power of talk. It hated dogma, and gave birth to perhaps the most dogmatic people who have ever lived.

The mixture of humility and audacity in Watts was partly of the time and partly of his nature, but also partly of his circumstances. Watts lived all his life in the kind of detachment which, while it makes men personally shy and diffident, gives them a gigantic confidence in their own ideas. He was a

born draughtsman : he never remembered the time he could not draw. But he had scarcely any formal education in art before he won with his cartoon of " Caractacus " the scholarship which permitted him to study in Italy ; and no master, dead or living, ever seems to have exerted any real influence on his style. He had many friends and comrades, but only one real hero, Tennyson, with whom he could not compete, and who could not compete with him. Sympathies he had with many movements and many kinds of men, even on certain points with politicians and publicists whom he must have regarded generally with a certain distaste ; something of a Radical in politics and much of a Puritan in temperament, he occasionally intervened in political and social causes on which he felt strongly. But he led no one, and he allowed no one to lead him ; acknowledging no master, he left no pupil. This isolation was favourable to an exaggeration of the general tendency of the Victorian great men to take themselves with immoderate seriousness, and the solemnity of Watts was a little oppressive to the natural man who chanced to come into his majestic presence. He had to be a very bold youngster who could venture on any flippancy within the range of " those pure eyes," which, in company with a nose of splendid line, a fine white beard, and a black silk skull-cap, suggested the " perfect witness," if not of " all-judging Jove," at least of the very archetype of a Puritanical Evangelical Chairman of Quarter Sessions.

If Watts was a great painter, he was assuredly a greater man, and one really felt in his presence the vastness of the possibilities of the race. But as a small human individual one also felt very small indeed. That is the effect of the Puritan. Probably most people felt small when they met Milton. But I can imagine that nobody could be in the same room with Shakespeare without feeling great.

CHAPTER XXVI

CHARLES HADDON SPURGEON—WILLIAM BOOTH

I HAVE remarked in another place that the man who takes his religion too seriously stands suspect of not quite believing in it. Those who are never troubled with doubts are prone to a wild hilarity which often exposes them to the charge of irreverence and coarse handling of sacred things. Since Nonconformity has widened, and new theologies have been propounded, it has become almost oppressively refined. When it was very narrow and dogmatic, and assured of itself, its chief exponents were often condemned as vulgar people. They were not really vulgar ; they were only so much on terms with their belief that they could take liberties with it and all things.

Charles Haddon Spurgeon was a man of that type. He was an unlearned man, and if he had been learned it is not at all likely that he would have been a profound or exact thinker ; it is much more probable that he would have been dulled into mere mediocrity. But if he did not know much of bookish things, he knew a good deal about things in general, and he knew (or thought he knew) absolutely one thing in particular, namely, that he was right in his conception of the purpose of Providence. It was this certitude, rather than any ingrained coarseness, that made him so boisterous and rollicking in his dealings with the most solemn subjects. He looked on "soul-saving" with the same sense of reality that a bricklayer looks on bricklaying, and he joked about

it as a bricklayer jokes when anything funny is suggested to him by an incident in his work.

Spurgeon did not survive long into the Nineties, but his influence did not altogether cease to count till the end of the decade. By the new century it was dying, and to-day it is dead—at any rate, so far as the high places of Nonconformity are concerned. The name Spurgeon is Dutch, and the great preacher was a Hollander in his remote origin ; he descended from a refugee who came to this country to escape the Alva persecution. Spurgeon's father was an Independent Minister, and he himself was "converted" by the Primitive Methodists, but at an early age he embraced the Baptist faith, and he preached as a Baptist his first sermon, delivered at sixteen, in a Cambridgeshire cottage. His family wished him to have some sort of " college " education, but he went his own way, believing then as always that practical work in " soul-saving " was more important than scholarship.

He was little more than a boy when he gained fame as a London preacher, addressing congregations of ten thousand at the Surrey Music Hall before the Metropolitan Tabernacle was built for him. His style was then very theatrical : a foreign scoffer remarked that his denunciations of the stage must have been prompted by jealousy, since he was himself so consummate an actor. In later years he relied less on meretricious effects and more on his essential earnestness, but to the end he took any liberties that occurred to him with his subject or his audience. In other respects he changed little or nothing. Through all the Darwinian controversy he remained unmoved by the arguments which flurried so many theological dovecotes. " Huxley and Darwin," he would say, " can go to—their ancestors the monkeys," and he would pause wickedly after the " to " for his congregation to titter. With the Higher Criticism, as

with evolution, he would have no truck whatever. But against the Church he had no particular feeling ; he read the Anglican divines much as another man might read Confucius, thinking them curious and interesting people from whom something might be learned. To the students of the Camberwell College, indeed, he recommended a book of Anglican sermons. Its author, he said, had been a parson, still worse a bishop, but despite these grave disadvantages had been a worthy and able man. In later years he even withdrew from the Liberation Society, apparently because he felt that his fellow-Dissenters were on the whole readier than the Church to fall in with what he called " down-grade " tendencies in biblical criticism. For the same reason he even withdrew from the Baptist Union. " If," he said, " you preach what is new, it will not be true ; if you preach what is true, it will not be new." For Rome, Spurgeon never pretended tolerance. When another Baptist owned that during a visit to France he had been present at the Mass, and " had never felt nearer the presence of God," Spurgeon replied that it was a good illustration of the text, " If I make my bed in hell, behold, Thou art there." It was, no doubt, his hatred of Rome that led him in 1886 to become a Liberal Unionist.

His Radicalism, however, had always been of a peculiar kind. He did not believe in " trusting the people," since most of the people were miserable sinners. He was not a Pacifist. " Turn the other cheek," he used to say, " but if that is smitten too, another law comes in ; you must either go for your man or get away from him." It was long, also—not, indeed, until he grew gouty—before he could be got to adhere to the teetotal movement, while he simply jeered at an anti-tobacco crusade. Spurgeon himself liked a good cigar ; was in no way an ascetic ; lived in style at Norwood, and used to drive to the

Tabernacle in a turnout which would have done credit to a stockbroker. On the other hand, he was the unrelenting foe of the theatre, and he denounced dancing as having cost the first Baptist his head. There was, indeed, in him a great deal more of the old hard-headed than of the new soft-hearted Puritan. His only departure from the seventeenth century was in the matter of his jocularity. It was natural with him—perhaps an inheritance from some jovial Hollander of the Jan Steen type—but it was also carefully cultivated. He kept an immense library of funny books to draw on for pulpit use, and was never more carelessly happy in the telling of a story than when he had studied it in all its bearings the night before. He never hesitated to use slang when it seemed to him effective ; witness the following :

" It is always best to go where God sends you. Jonah thought he would go to Tarshish instead of Nineveh, but when the whale got hold of him he was sucked in."

" Though you are teetotallers you must all come to your bier at last."

" To some people Bible reading is like flea-catching ; they pick up a thought here and there, hold it between finger and thumb, and then hop on somewhere else."

" Seek to possess both unction and gumption."

These sentences were addressed to candidates for the Baptist ministry. It is noteworthy that in such Spurgeon always assumed a lack of refinement—an assumption which would be hotly resented by the Nonconformist student of to-day. Especially irritating would be his advice never to drop an aspirate ; to the importance of the initial " H " he was continually reverting. In deeper matters he was insistent on eternal punishment ; to question hell was to question the Scripture. But he used to say that no doubt God would show " every consideration " to

those predestined to damnation—how he never explained in detail. He would have been very angry with feminism if it had been an important thing in his day ; woman, he thought, should be kept in her place ; and he despised the man who was swayed by his wife. He was fond of pointing out that most of the troubles of the Hebrew patriarchs could be traced to their too much marriage.

And the rest of the acts of Charles Haddon Spurgeon, the wideawake that he wore, the clerical coat that he would not wear, the puns and money that he made, the stones that he weighed, and the spiritual bread that he dispensed, the sermons that he preached, the 30,000 printed copies a week that he sold, the men that he knew, those that he consorted with, and those that he assailed mightily—are they not written in chronicles of Nonconformity ? In due time Charles Haddon Spurgeon died, and was gathered to his fathers, and nobody reigned in his stead, and of the mighty house that he did not build nothing is written anywhere, for, with all his brightness and breeziness and firm faith and sturdiness and trite common sense, he lacked all the qualities that go to the building of anything but a reputation. He had a voice, and after that little.

But for just that which Spurgeon wanted William Booth would have been another Spurgeon. But to his faith and enthusiasm he joined something not at all common among religious enthusiasts in this country. His heart was a chaos of crude and uncontrolled emotionalism, but he had the head of a ruler. It is a common reproach against English Protestantism that it does not understand how to harness spiritual energy. Of that art William Booth was a master, and in more favouring circumstances he would probably have been included in the list of founders of mighty religious orders. It is tempting

(*From a portrait by J. McLure Hamilton.*)

GENERAL BOOTH.

to speculate what might have been the present position of the Salvation Army had Booth, who was brought up as a member of the Church of England, and had certainly no enmity to that Church, been encouraged to pursue his work within its communion. Left to himself, he was unable to provide his organisation with that firm philosophical basis which seems a necessary condition of permanence in a religious society. He could invent a hierarchy, but he had to borrow a theology ; and the raggedness of his dogmatic formation was in pathetic contrast with the splendid " dressing " of his human cohorts. He could offer a dram to the spiritually fainting, but man cannot live by stimulants alone, and the Salvation Army had little more in the way of spiritual nutriment to offer those who began to hunger for something more solid. Its only expedient was to join the excitement of definite work to that of cloudy religion. The Army tended even in Booth's lifetime to become more and more an organ of social endeavour and less and less a definitely Christian thing ; it was in its lay and not in its religious character that it won during the Nineties the goodwill of countless excellent pagans, and was patronised by precisely the same sort of people who had at first assailed it as the blasphemous travesty of a sect.

" A bawling, fanatical, send-round-the-hatical, pick-up-the-pence old pair." So were Booth and his devoted wife described by *Truth* in the early Eighties. Fifteen years later the old " General," now a widower, was never mentioned in a reputable paper without profound respect. The inverted commas had long disappeared, and even Royalty condescended to compliment him on his fine work for the " submerged tenth." But all this recognition was really a sign of failure. Or, to put the matter less crudely, it was a sign that the secondary object of the Army had become more important than its primary aim. Booth

had set out first of all to save men's souls, and some people threw cabbage stalks at him, while others flung him jeers and slanders. The applause only came when it was evident that, with the incidental disadvantage of brass bands and a crazy vocabulary of enthusiasm, the Army was very useful for distributing soup and getting firewood chopped.

Booth proved how thin are the partitions dividing the excess of democracy from autocratic rule. His government was at first purely paternal. When the family got too large for his personal rule he had to delegate authority, but every officer whom he put in a position of trust was given plenary power to the extent of his commission. "Government by talk" he had tried and put aside. "This method of work," he said, "will never shake the Kingdom of the Devil"; and so he adopted the military system. In this he was probably only following the suggestion of his own imperious nature. But if he had been actuated by the deepest craft he could hardly have hit on a more certain method of keeping his converts together. Men and women care a great deal less for liberty than for domination; they will accept most cheerfully subordination for themselves if it affords them a present chance or a sure prospect of exercising despotic sway over others. "From the moment," says Booth, "of our adopting the simple method of responsible and individual commands and personal obedience our whole campaign partook of a new character; in place of the hesitation and almost total want of progress from which we have been suffering, every development of the work leaped forward." The brass band, the flag, and the red jersey probably had comparatively little to do with the Army's success. These were useful to attract attention, and may perhaps have allured some simple-minded and very unæsthetic people. But apart from the deeper spiritual elements, the main

point, I imagine, was the fascination of authority. Comfortable people, accustomed to deference throughout life, have little conception of the hunger for respect which reigns among those who seldom get it. Indeed, half our social troubles would be over if the " better " classes could grasp the simple fact that the " lower " classes are much more sensitive than themselves on all points of dignity. To a mere factory hand, man or woman—it was a novelty of the Army that it put the sexes from the first on an exactly equal footing—it was luxury to put off insignificance with the work-day clothes and put on importance with the Army uniform. In the Booth hierarchy there was room for the pride of the wretched and the ambition of the destitute.

It was the great talent of Booth to put to use the most unlikely things. His use of vulgarity was very characteristic. The vulgarity of some other popular preachers of the time was a natural emanation. But Booth was not naturally vulgar ; no man could be with such a profile. He had really fine manners ; to a king he would talk as if he were an old king himself ; and there was never a suggestion in his intercourse with the greatest either of bumptiousness or servility. The vulgarity of his methods was of set purpose, like St. Francis's hostility to worldly culture, and, though it was at once common form to inveigh against the coarse profanities of a Salvation Army meeting, I have found highly sensitive people far less repelled by their wildest extravagances than by the much more ordinary irreverence of the regulation " revivalist." It might not be true to say that while others vulgarised sacred things Booth sanctified vulgarity. But it is true that, if one might sometimes smile at his audacities, they never made one shudder.

In other conditions, as I have said, Booth might have won immortality as a saint of the Church. In

still other circumstances he might have been a most considerable statesman. His *Darkest England* is much more than a philanthropic manifesto. The schemes outlined in it for dealing with unemployment by training and emigration are eminently wise and practical, and, if it is permissible to indulge a regret that his great qualities were not available for the Church, it may also be suggested that something was lost by the failure of politicians to make fuller use of his remarkable insight and experience concerning social problems. The inspiration on these matters gradually passed from him to the Webbs. It was not, probably, a change for the better. For though Booth was quite hard-headed in these concrete matters, he had also that wisdom of the heart in which Fabianism was deficient. He would say, and quite justly, in reply to those who argued that the Army attracted people too lazy for regular work, and actually created a class of unemployables, that John Jones was outside in the street, without work or food, and something must be done for him at once ; it was useless to wait for a social revolution. But he was under no illusions as to the nature of existing society. " There are many vices," he wrote, " and seven deadly sins ; but of late years many of the seven have contrived to pass themselves off as virtues. Avarice, for instance, and Pride, when re-baptised Thrift and Self-Respect, have become the guardian angels of Christian Civilisation, and as for Envy, it is the corner-stone upon which much of our competitive system is founded." Again : " I am a strong believer in co-operation, but it must be co-operation based on the spirit of benevolence. I don't see how any pacific readjustment of the social and economic relations between classes in this country can be effected except by the gradual substitution of co-operative associations for the present wages system." Assuredly the man who wrote these things was something more than a fanatic.

Booth's decision with regard to his children's education was most typical of the man. Certain friends offered to pay the expenses of a University training for his eldest son. No, said Booth; he should enlist in the Army at an early age, and go through the usual Salvation training. Booth was not stupid, and could have had none of the stupid man's contempt for education. But he seemed to be a little afraid of it, and from his own point of view who can say he had not reason? In the same spirit the Churchmen of the Renaissance fought against the teaching of Greek, not because they were all fools, but because some of them foresaw the dangers that actually followed. Booth was perhaps not wrong in suspecting that the higher education of his time, while making a man cocksure about things now debatable or disproved, would tend to make him dubious or indifferent about things which in his view permitted neither of incertitude nor of lukewarmness.

But if he hoped thus to secure to the thing he had made the vitality he had temporarily imparted to it, the hope was doomed to be disappointed. It could hardly be fulfilled, in any case, if the Army was to continue in isolation; for the Army was an order rather than a sect, with a discipline rather than a creed, and in the absence of its creator's inspiration its tendency must have been to harden into formalism. That process had, indeed, begun even before the General's death. It was suggested above that during the Nineties the Salvation Army was wounded by kindness. In the days of its persecution it was at least free; it had the feeling that it might just as well be hanged for a sheep as a lamb. But when the suburbs threw bouquets instead of stones the Salvationists found that the respect of the respectable is a chain. They were henceforth fettered. They could expand, but they could not change. The

movement was canalised and stereotyped ; it had won recognition as a useful social adjunct, and it had to live up to its reputation. It became static in everything but its statistics. Gradually its tunes have grown old-fashioned ; its uniforms are one with the tight military trouser and the bustled skirt ; the *War Cry* is as definitely a paper with a past as *Reynolds's* or the *Referee*. In its way the Army, no doubt, does as much good as ever. But the limits of that good are known. And it keeps nobody awake at night thinking of what might happen with the ferment of a revolutionary Christianity working among the English poor.

Booth was a great man of his kind—greater far than most of the Right Honourables and Right Reverends of his day—and it was a mighty thing that he built from defaced stones and nameless rubble rejected by all others. But he was too honest to fabricate a new religion, and a religious order implies a Church to order it.

CHAPTER XXVII

SOME LAWYERS

DIM enough now is the memory of the Parnell Commission. There are few who, without reference to record, could give an intelligent summary of the findings of the unhappy judges whom political exigency condemned for over a year to take " evidence " concerning a vast amount of miscellaneous matter incapable of legal proof.

But from the general vagueness of that dreary inquiry there still stand out in sharp and abrupt relief two main figures. One is that of an ageing man, bald and bowed, of a threadbare respectability ; respectability, indeed, is the only real thing about him, and to that god he is presently to make the last sacrifice. Richard Pigott was not, one imagines, a specially bad man. But, unfortunately for himself, there was the necessity for him and his to live respectably, and his situation and endowments did not permit him to live at once respectably and honestly. He had no kind of settled calling behind the wall of which he could fruitfully cultivate such small talents as he possessed. In a shop or an office he might have carried his little battle of life to the point where one may at least make terms of dignity with Death. But he had strayed into one of the dangerous trades. Journalism abounds in perils to all men ; it is quite fatal to the man who lacks both scruple and ability. Richard Pigott was a bravo with the parts of a small shopkeeper. One of Fagin's pupils let others take the risks and glory of burglary ; his specialty was the " Kinchin Lay,"

or snatching pence out of the hands of small children. Pigott belonged to the "kinchin lay" of political journalism; his business was that of furtive slander and timid lying. He was only used by his employers for jobs which bigger if not more scrupulous men would disdain; and as these jobs were neither numerous nor lucrative he had sunk in middle life to all sorts of miserable stratagems to keep his small pot boiling. On such service, however, or the pretence of it, Pigott acquired a certain standing with propagandist auxiliaries of the Unionist Party, and was eventually employed to collect evidence connecting Parnellism with crime. He was paid a guinea a day; expenses were liberally defrayed, and for the first time for many years the poor hack found himself in clover. During a considerable period he enjoyed himself at first-class hotels in Ireland, Great Britain, and on the Continent. But as time went on his patrons, disappointed with the tame and inconclusive character of the "evidence," hinted that something much more sensational was wanted, or supplies would be stopped. Pigott saw before him a new plunge, perhaps this time without hope of re-emergence, into the penury from which he had momentarily escaped. The prospect was too bleak, and he decided that, whatever happened, his employers must be satisfied, and the essential something must be supplied. So he forged certain letters purporting to be written by Mr. Parnell—letters which, if genuine, would have proved Parnell's privity to the Phœnix Park murders, and branded him as a man merely infamous. These letters had been printed in facsimile as Parnell's; they were supported by all the prestige of a great newspaper; and probably a majority of people in this country still believed they were really Parnell's when Richard Pigott first stood up to face the cross-examination of Sir Charles Russell.

Those who sat through that cross-examination will

never forget it. It is usual to describe such a spectacle as dramatic, and in a sense this spectacle was. It was, however, the drama not of the theatre, with its surprises and quick alternations, but of one of those gigantesque novels of Victor Hugo which depict some devoted wretch overwhelmed by the slow march of an unrelenting destiny. For two days Pigott saw closing round him, thread by thread and mesh by mesh, the net from which death was the sole escape. At first he was moderately glib and composed. But as the cross-examination proceeded the miserable man showed in the contortion of his features, in a brow dank with perspiration, in whitened face and trembling limb, the agony that oppressed him. It was a sight to awaken compassion even in those who had suffered most from his villainy. In his easiest moments Sir Charles Russell was sufficiently formidable. " A more frigid-looking man," says his Irish biographer, " it had never been my fortune to behold." His eyes were of the kind that take in everything and give out nothing ; in one mood they seemed to search the very soul of his interlocutor, in another they were capable of the kind of ferocity that has the effect of physical shock. It is said that an unfortunate suitor lost his wits at the glare of Jeffreys, and those who had to do with Russell could find no great difficulty in believing the legend.

Not a few judges, fenced round with scarlet dignity, felt the terror of Russell's manner, and as for the solicitors who brought him briefs, " the way he treated them," says a contemporary, " won't bear repeating." Those who knew him best declared that his roughly imperious manner concealed a kind heart. But there was no cross-examiner at the Bar whose very personality was more likely to strike awe into the heart of a witness with something on his conscience. His strong features—there was something a little sinister in their expression, the effect, so far as I

remember him, of a very decisive nose just a little out of the straight—could wear a positively terrifying expression ; it was hard to say whether his voice was most deadly when it sank to a menacing whisper or when it boomed out in tones of thunder ; but above all there was the sense almost of an elemental force, as resistless and unrelenting as the bog which engulfs the incautious traveller.

There is no need to describe in detail how the wretched Pigott, entrapped and bedevilled till there was no possible escape, broke down under that pitiless torture, made confession during the adjournment of the court, fled the country, and finally ended his earthly troubles with a suicide's bullet. But those two days, in the words of Lord Rosebery, brought Russell at a bound " from a solid reputation to supreme eminence." Russell was not exaggerating when, in his subsequent speech for Parnell, he claimed to have reversed the whole position, placing in the dock those who had so far been the prosecutors. " When I opened this case, my lords," he began in low conversational tones, " I represented the accused." Then, suddenly allowing his voice to reach its full volume, and pointing a minatory finger to the place occupied by the Attorney-General—Sir Richard Webster—he cried, " Now we are the accusers, and the accused are there." It was a moment of intense drama. There was little in what was said. But the manner and the effect were marvellous ; the whole thing was a triumph, not of eloquence, or of intellect, but of that mysterious force we call personality. Russell, indeed, was no great orator, even in the law courts, and as a political speaker he was very far from successful. But he was, in his own proper way, a great person, and something akin to genius enabled him to achieve, with less obvious endowments than many other lawyers—for he was wholly deficient in wit, and was not exceptionally subtle, or exceptionally

learned, or exceptionally gifted in words—a position as an advocate unequalled in his time. During the Nineties his earning capacity was far beyond that of any other lawyer. As early as 1874, when little more than forty, he was making an income of over ten thousand a year ; after the triumph of the Parnell Commission the value put on his services mounted abruptly, and in his last full year of practice at the Bar his fees amounted to over £22,000.

It was a weakness of Russell to boast that he was a pure " Celt," by which he probably meant a pure Irishman. But he was really of Anglo-Norman ancestry, the descendant of one Robert de Rosel who accompanied Strongbow on the expedition which brought Ireland under the English Crown. His family was in comfortable circumstances, devoutly Catholic, and inclined to things of the mind. Of the children only Charles followed a secular career. His brother Matthew rose to distinction in the Society of Jesus ; his three sisters became nuns. There is a story that the two boys were once cut off by the rising tide in Carlingford Lough. Matthew prayed ; Charles whistled. The whistle was heard, and the boys were rescued. But Charles Russell would at no time have suggested that the appeal to human aid was more efficacious than the prayer. For he was, in his own way, not less devout than his brother the Jesuit. The great advocate, gorged with suitors' gold, the politician for whom Mr. Gladstone strained every nerve to secure the Lord Chancellorship, the man of pleasure so well known wherever horses ran or cards were played, was in many ways a very different person from the Belfast solicitor of the Fifties and the struggling barrister of the early Sixties. But his religion remained a constant with Russell, and, though it was a shock to him to find his daughter, like her aunts, determined to take the veil, he accepted the situation with grace, and his letter yielding to her wishes was

as tender and delicately expressed a renunciation of a father's natural hopes as can be found in the language. His religious bias was rather quaintly illustrated in his views on divorce, not so much on the thing itself as on the attitude of parties towards it. He had no objection to a woman seeking relief from the Courts ; but he thought she ought to wear black when doing so. He was always annoyed by a gaily dressed petitioner. " They may not be sorry," he used to say, " but they should at least pretend they are sorry."

Russell's fame as an advocate wholly overshadowed his reputation as a politician. He was twice Attorney-General ; he had a place of importance in the inner councils of the Liberal Party ; and he spoke with industry and intelligence wherever he was wanted to speak. But he was not at his happiest either in the House of Commons or on the platform. With fellow-members of Parliament he was too haughty, and with popular audiences too cold and formal, and his mind had neither the breadth nor the geniality for the part either of a statesman or a demagogue. But as Lord Chief Justice he notably falsified the saying that a great advocate seldom makes a great judge. Some of his faults of manner remained. He was sometimes a little arbitrary, and often not a little rough. But he had the one great quality of getting straight, through all kinds of incidental and irrelevant matter, at the heart of a case ; and the trial of Dr. Jameson showed his iron disregard for mere popularity. Standing between the Jury and public opinion, he permitted them no loophole for a verdict of acquittal. Four years afterwards he said : " Public opinion was apparently exasperated because any sentence had been passed at all. When I tried them people said I was too hard on them. Now people say I was not hard enough." Lord Russell as a judge and a Peer turned to account the considerable knowledge of the seamy side of business life he acquired in his early years as

a solicitor and as an advocate appearing chiefly in commercial suits, and one of his latest acts was the introduction of a Bill to deal with the evil of secret commissions. " He was struck down," wrote a great lawyer after his death, " before the full measure of his powers as a law reformer and administrator could be felt."

Essentially a man of action, finding little solace in literature or art, his amusements were of the more frivolous kind. He was fond of racing, boxing, theatres, and billiards, and had a passion for cards that sometimes made him indifferent in what company he played. On one occasion this habit exposed him to a cutting retort. A young Guardsman staying at the same hotel had been asked to make one of a hand at whist. But Russell, whose partner he was, soon found that the soldier was very drunk indeed. He bore for a while the erratic play, but at last threw down his hand, exclaiming, " This is not whist ; it is tomfoolery." The Guardsman, quite unabashed, told him to " keep his hair on." Any kind of familiarity was intolerable to Russell, and this insolence at once threw him into a towering rage. " Do you know who I am, sir ? " he demanded, with that savage glare that had frightened so many reluctant witnesses. But the soldier faced him as coolly as he would have done a battery. " Know you ! Of course I do. But remember, my man, you're not in your silly old police court now." This was precisely the kind of answer which left Russell helpless. For, though his tastes were a little ordinary and his manner rather rough, he was incapable of the verbal coarseness which is in some cases the only rational alternative to silence. Anything savouring of brutality or looseness was intolerable to him, and it is said that nobody ever dared twice to tell a doubtful story in his presence. He contributed little to the jollity of the Bar mess on circuit, and in ordinary society was

inclined to silence, though he could occasionally tell well enough a story of the kind he liked.

Mr. Balfour is credited with saying once that if he and Lord Randolph Churchill had gone to the Bar they must have made forty thousand a year instead of the twenty thousand or so which then represented the high-watermark of forensic success. Few would go so far as to make such a claim. But most people must sometimes have wondered, in watching the great barrister in an unfamiliar environment, how much of his eminence is due to sheer intellect. Certainly very few high reputations in the Courts are increased in politics, and those barristers who do succeed in the House of Commons are generally rather lightly regarded in the Law Courts. Lord Russell was an example of the great lawyer who is also a great personality but is hardly a man of great general elevation. His mind, though vigorous and acute, was essentially narrow ; the sap of his intellect was directed almost exclusively to things immediate and practical. On all general questions he lagged behind the opinion of his time. Thus, though he early took a keen interest in Irish politics, and in his later years seldom spoke on anything but Home Rule, his conversion to that cause did not ante-date Mr. Gladstone's. He had always held that, if Home Rule was necessary, it must come gradually through extensions of local government, but he did not regard it as necessary. Yet he had no difficulty in following Mr. Gladstone when the split came. The truth was that, considered from a worldly point of view, he was mainly a professional man, with professional ambitions and professional thoughts, and politics were to him, rather more than to most lawyers, a means of rounding off his career as an advocate. At the same time, he had no small share of the temperament that made so many of his family embrace a religious life. Money and position were realities ; so

was religion ; other things were less real. It is a temperament puzzling to people in Protestant countries, who understand neither the griping materialism of the Papist peasant nor the scarcely less materialistic mysticism of the Papist peasant's brother who happens to be a saint. But it is a temperament very Irish, and Russell, though his frigidity made him most unlike the " typical " Irishman of our conceptions, was an Irishman to the core.

Lord Russell's contemporary and rival, Sir Richard Webster, who succeeded him as Lord Chief Justice under the title of Lord Alverstone, was in every way his opposite. Russell had personality and a touch of genius ; Webster was wholly destitute of atmosphere. Russell often carried judge and jury with him by sheer momentum ; with Webster it was dogged that did it. Russell, if not excessively Irish on the surface, was, for good or ill, wholly un-English in any part of him ; Webster was a most authentic specimen of the Englishman in his least exciting aspect. He was the kind of man who has always been a source of splendid strength to this country—the man who can ever be depended on to do good, honest, sterling work, and is never under suspicion of dangerous brilliance. Whether the task be trying a murderer, or ruling an Eastern province, or running a civil service department, or writing a column for *Punch*, it is to men like Webster that our confidence is mainly given, and we are never really easy unless they are in a majority. Webster happened to go in for law, his family circumstances tending that way. But when Lord Salisbury suddenly brought him into politics, making him a law officer before he had a seat in the House of Commons, he at once attained the same sort of success in Parliament that he had achieved at the Bar. If he had gone from Trinity College, Cambridge, to Trichinopoly, it would have

been the same. Such men as Webster never fail, even as comic singers. Webster sang a very excellent comic song, and would often do so in congenial company, even after he had reached the Bench. And he ran a capital mile race, was great over hurdles, played a good game of cricket, cycled much when the bicycle was out of fashion, and to the end of his life read the sporting papers with at least as much interest as the *Law Times*.

In a word, there was much health in him, and quite as much ability as he wanted for his purpose. The one thing he lacked was a touch of distinction. That horrible word " level-headed " was not inapplicable to him. If Webster was never, in any circumstances, below a certain standard, he paid the penalty of never rising above it. Nobody ever said, nobody ever did, fewer notable things. He had some very big jobs as an advocate : he led for the Crown before the Parnell Commission ; he prosecuted Jabez Balfour, the Liberator swindler ; he prosecuted the authors of the Jameson Raid ; he served as junior to Russell in the Behring Sea arbitration ; and he was leading counsel for this country in the Venezuela arbitration. The praise showered on him for his conduct of these great international cases was undoubtedly deserved. But the quality of the praise is worth notice. " The care and preciseness with which he prepared the cases," says an authority, " bore traces of tremendous labour. Unlike the American lawyers, who dealt principally in general propositions, Webster advanced no point that could not be legally supported and defended." Webster was, in fact, an almost perfect specimen of the matter-of-fact British lawyer who, having a complete contempt for first principles, and a vast reverence for precedent and punctilio, is " greatly trusted and respected by solicitors." He was helped by a ponderously earnest and almost prayerful manner,

which suggested that a certain moral obliquity, and an element not quite English, you know, resided with the side opposed to him.

If Sir Richard Webster had been just a little more "English," a good deal less able, and far less learned, he might have made another Mr. Justice Grantham. There was just the sort of resemblance between the two men that obtains between a first-rate portrait and a very wild and wicked caricature. Both were intensely Conservative, intensely respectable, intensely unimaginative, intensely moral and well-meaning. But Mr. Justice Grantham, like necessity, knew no law, while Lord Alverstone knew a great deal; and Lord Alverstone had the judicial temperament in full measure, while Mr. Justice Grantham could not, without severe mental discomfort, listen to more than one side of a case. His ordinary course was to take a glance at both litigants; that was generally sufficient, but if both seemed equally objectionable he might be impelled to take sides according as he liked or disliked counsel. Taking a side was quite necessary to him. I remember one case in which he suffered, for quite a little time, the agonies of choice. The issue lay between an Englishman who had become some sort of heathen and a naturally black and heathen man. As an intensely religious English gentleman Sir William Grantham was bound to disapprove very strongly of anybody who threw away the advantages of having been born a "happy English child." But at least equally he did not like colour. For about a quarter of an hour his bosom was torn by conflicting feelings; then he made up his mind that the calls of blood were paramount, and for the rest of the hearing went strongly against the hapless dark-skinned litigant. Judicially Sir William Grantham was simply the Great Reversible. Personally he was an extraordinarily good-hearted man,

and those who had least respect for his judicial qualities were among his warmest friends. There was not a dry eye in the Law Courts when it became known that he had been called before the highest of all tribunals.

A very different type of lawyer was Sir Francis Jeune, the famous President of the Divorce Court. A handsome, bearded man, with features of a slightly Semitic cast, and courtly manners not quite English —he was born in Jersey, though little of his life had been spent there—he was, both professionally and socially, one of the best-known figures of the Nineties. His wife, the widow of a Peer's younger son, was a great entertainer, and her fondness for everything either " smart " or intellectual was a considerable factor in breaking down the barriers which still existed between " the classes " and mere talent or mere money. Judges seldom make much figure in society ; and in the Nineties there still clung to them as a class much of that Bohemian character which derived from the days when Circuit duty implied a lengthy banishment from London and a rough bachelor life in the Assize towns. Mr. Justice Hawkins, later Lord Brampton, was not perhaps quite typical of his brethren, and the exaggerated untidiness of Lord Justice Vaughan Williams was exceptional. But not less exceptional was the combination of scholarliness and mondaine aplomb of Sir Francis Jeune. As a divorce judge he had a perfect style ; it could hardly have been beaten by the bedside manner of a Royal physician. It was a delight to hear him interpreting the degree of affection implied in a wife's reference to her husband as " my dear little black piggie." No man was more apt in discussing the psychology of sex. In one case he showed, by a wealth of refined analysis and historical allusion, how, while it was quite possible for a man

to be in love with two women at the same time, and leave each in the belief that she was the sole mistress of his heart, no woman was capable of such liberality or such dissimulation. He was a great advocate of temporary separation as a possible cure for ills matrimonial ; " absence," he held, " often made the heart grow wiser." A rigid moralist might have ventured the criticism that the delightful man-of-the-world way in which Sir Francis dealt with suits and suitors was prejudicial to the interests of marriage ; a divorce as managed by him seemed so entirely ordinary and innocent an affair. But, suave as he was, he could be strong on occasion, and he once committed a Duchess to prison with the most perfect and relentless good breeding. Ordinarily he shunned the rôle of judicial humorist ; Mr. Justice Darling was then a very young judge, and the older jesters were of the coarser genre. But occasionally a good thing came out accidentally. Thus it was once pointed out that he had joined in prayers at the Archbishops' Court, whose competence was impugned in the case then being argued. " Yes," said Sir Francis, " but I prayed without prejudice."

The name of Lord Coleridge has a very far-away sound ; yet, though he was born in 1820 and called in 1847, he was still a great figure in the early Nineties. It was a majestic sight to see him rise sweepingly from the Bench at the close of a sitting. He was six feet three in height, erect and sturdy, though not corpulent, and this tall column of manhood was crowned by an appropriately noble capital ; his head was large and finely shaped, and his features, while strong and significant, were suffused with a benignancy of expression which might be occasionally misleading. For he could say very nasty things in his gentle and delicately modulated voice—a voice the beauty of which Sir Charles Russell had never

known surpassed. As a cross-examiner he had shown deadly power in his days of advocacy. The smashing of the Tichborne pretender had been one of his great forensic feats ; during the larger part of the cross-examination his drift was not generally appreciated, but when he sat down the fraud was completely unmasked, and at the subsequent trial for perjury it was found that Coleridge had, in the words of a commentator, " stopped all the earths." He died in the spring of 1894, after over twenty years in the great post of Lord Chief Justice. He was undoubtedly a very great judge, but, being on a large scale all round, his faults were not exactly small. His temper was despotic, his language could be bitter, he had many dislikes, and was at once subtle and indiscreet. A fondness for society, going with a disposition to fall foul of many units in society, naturally led to many collisions, and he was as constant in his feuds as in his friendships. Even in his old age he could, if the matter were of sufficient importance, rouse himself to great mental efforts. But those who saw him presiding over his Court in the early Nineties were chiefly conscious of dignified somnolence, and the alertness and vitality of his successor, Russell, seemed almost indecent after the repose that had reigned so long.

Lord Coleridge was one of those lawyers who retain their political prejudices in unmitigated form after translation to the Bench ; he was to the last as dogmatic a Liberal as Grantham was a Conservative. Thus in 1892 he wrote to a correspondent, " I am out of politics, of course, but I would go far and do much to destroy the Unionists. To them and them alone is due coercion and all the train of evils and the denial of obvious and safe improvements in England and Scotland. I have no feeling against the Tories ; there must be such people in every old-established and aristocratic country, and they at least are honest and act steadily on principle. But a Unionist who pre-

tends to be and calls himself a Liberal, and who for seven long years has voted for everything reactionary and entirely opposed to his creed—I have no patience with these men." We hear much now about the degradation of the Press. Lord Coleridge thought the solemn London papers of the early Nineties, though " rather better educated " than the American, " to the full as vile," and " with a swagger and insufferable pretence and self-assertion " from which American journalism was free. Moreover, the " Court and aristocracy degrade the independence and corrupt the manners of the vast numbers who are brought within their influence." It can be well understood that a man holding such opinions, and expressing them with such vigour, was only popular among those who thought with him. For the rest, Lord Coleridge was fond of good pictures, good music, good living, and good stories. He was not himself the hero of many anecdotes, but one may serve. He was sitting in Court with Mr. Justice Groves one day when a slip of paper was handed up to the Bench conveying the news of a most unexpected judicial appointment. Groves exclaimed, " Well, I *am* damned." " My learned brother," said Coleridge, " I do not indulge in profane language myself, but if you would repeat that word it would really relieve my mind."

No survey of the legal landscape of the Nineties would be complete without some reference to that most individual figure, Sir Frank Lockwood. Of middle-class Yorkshire birth, Lockwood inherited from his father a facility in caricature and from his mother a keen sense of humour. He was meant for the Church, and sent to Cambridge with orders in view. But his lively nature rebelled against this decorous career, and after he had taken his degree and spent a little time in tutoring he decided to go to the Bar. His first case was a formal appearance to

give consent on the part of a certain corporation ; the fee was three guineas for the brief and one guinea for consultation. A rather testy judge remarked on the unnecessarily large number of counsel appearing. " You, sir," he demanded, turning to Lockwood, " what are you here for ? " " Three and one, m'lud ; merely three and one," was the soft answer, which did not turn away judicial wrath, but did attract professional attention to the young barrister.

Lockwood is a singular and almost unique example of a barrister making a very creditable success by abandoning himself frankly to the very side of his temperament which would seem least likely to help him in so grave a profession. He throve on a studied light-heartedness. His parts were not specially quick ; he had a fundamental common-sense, but little more, and if he had taken himself quite seriously it is likely the legal world would have taken him quite lightly. But it was not easy for judges or witnesses or jurymen to resist the fascination of his cheery presence and genial humour. His jokes were always cracked with a shrewd eye to business, and many of them would not have sounded very amusing outside a court of justice. But they were above the ordinary level of forensic humour, and there came to be a recognised " Lockwood brief." The character of a jester was also useful as leading to a wide journalistic renown. " Lockwood's latest " went the rounds as merrily as the sparkling witticisms of the facetious lodger of Mrs. Todgers. The paragraphists were delighted to narrate how Lockwood, seeing a Scottish host sign for himself and his wife in the traditional Highland way, " Cluny and Mrs. McPherson," himself wrote, " 26, Lennox Gardens, S.W., and Mrs. Lockwood." With equal glee they told how Mr. Lockwood went to a chapel where his Nonconformist friend, Mr. Samuel Danks Waddy, Q.C., was advertised to give a brief, bright, and brotherly address, and how Waddy turned

the tables on him by solemnly giving out that "Brother Lockwood would now lead in prayer."

"It amuses my friends very much," said Mr. Peter Magnus when telling Mr. Pickwick that his initials were P.M., and that in notes to intimate friends he sometimes signed himself "Afternoon." Mr. Pickwick was secretly "envious of the ease with which Mr. Magnus's friends were amused," and no doubt a professional merry-maker must have sighed over the inexpensive triumphs of Sir Frank Lockwood. But the thing did what it was intended to do, and on the strength of his caricatures and his jokes, far more than by any conspicuous ability, Lockwood climbed to a Recordership, a seat in Parliament, a good social position, and finally the Solicitor-Generalship.

His early death seemed the more pathetic because of his intense enjoyment of life and the unusual bounty with which Fate had so far treated one who was after all but a light-weight. He had always been a little nervous about his physical health and not a little anxious lest his professional standing should diminish. Thinking thus, he had his eye on the Bench. Lord Halsbury, whose professional sympathies were even stronger than his political prejudices, was favourable, and called on him during the last month of his life. But it was too plainly evident that Lockwood's course was run, and the well-meaning visit could have no result. "He must have felt," said Lockwood to Mr. Birrell a day or two later, glancing at his own wasted frame, "that I should make an excellent puisne judge."

Lockwood's personal opinion of litigation is perhaps worth quotation. "Never by any chance," he wrote to a relative, "become involved in any difficulties which will bring you into a court of law of higher jurisdiction than a police court. An occasional drunk and disorderly will do you no harm and only cost you five shillings. Beyond a little indulgence of this kind—beware."

CHAPTER XXVIII

OLD AND NEW JOURNALISTS

WHAT we do, are, and suffer journalistically was determined for us in the Nineties. The decade was the meeting-ground of opposing forces, and the battle between them was largely fought to a decision before the end. In 1890 the old " solid " journalism—and it was very solid indeed—decidedly enjoyed pride of place ; the newer journalism was not too firmly established ; the newest journalism had conquered but an insignificant portion of the weekly Press, and had gained no daily representative.

Ten years later the whole scene was changed. The old journalism was manifestly stricken to death, though it took an unconscionable time to die. The newer journalism—its most typical representative was *The Star*—had advanced but slightly. The newest journalism—that of Alfred Harmsworth and his imitators—was in the heyday of youthful vigour, very much alive, and perpetually kicking. It is not easy to find a parallel to a change so swift, so silent, and so complete—a change, moreover, so powerful and various in its effect, for the newest journalism, with its loud and simple Imperialism, its indifference to party ties, its lack of interest in moral or religious questions, its intense concern in wealth and the manifestations of wealth, has contributed as much as anything to the digging of that great spiritual gulf which separates us from the Victorian time.

At the beginning of the Nineties the older news-

paper Press seemed to enjoy all the prestige which had been its since Gladstone made a cheap Press possible. The "great dailies" were not largely circulated, as circulations now go; they were very cheaply conducted, by all modern standards of expenditure; they had few interests, apart from politics; they do not seem, to one who turns over the yellow files, conspicuously well written. But they commanded an almost idolatrous respect. The average of British mankind took his paper not much less seriously than his passbook, and rather more seriously than his Bible. The journalist himself might still, perhaps, be rather lightly regarded; there might be men still who, like George Warrington, blushed when they confessed to making an honest living out of pen and ink.

> "I write," said Warrington. "I don't tell the world that I do so," he added with a blush. "I do not choose that questions should be asked; or perhaps I am an ass, and don't wish it to be said that George Warrington writes for bread."

But the same Warrington—a much more delicious snob than any in his creator's special book on that species—could indulge in such a rhapsody on the Press as the following:

> They were passing through the Strand as they talked, and by a newspaper office, which was all lighted up and bright. Reporters were coming out of the place, or rushing up to it in cabs; there were lamps burning in the editors' rooms, and above where the compositors were at work; the windows of the building were in a blaze of gas.
>
> "Look at that, Pen," Warrington said. "There she is—the great engine—she never sleeps. She

> has her ambassadors in every quarter of the world—her couriers upon every road. Her officers march along with armies, and her envoys walk into statesmen's cabinets. They are ubiquitous. Yonder journal has an agent, at this minute, giving bribes in Madrid, and another inspecting the price of potatoes in Covent Garden. Look! Here comes the Foreign Express galloping in. They will be able to give news to Downing Street to-morrow; funds will rise or fall, fortunes be made or lost; Lord B. will get up, and, holding the paper in his hand, and seeing the noble Marquis in his place, will make a great speech; and—and Mr. Doolan will be called away from his supper at the back kitchen; for he is the foreign sub-editor, and sees the mail on the newspaper sheet before he goes to his own."

That was the feeling about the Press in Thackeray's time, and it was still the feeling in the early Nineties; the sense of something almost superhuman in its intelligence. Thackeray, as a kind of gentleman, heartily scorned the newspaper people with whom he was thrown into professional contact, but he had a vast respect for the final result of all their efforts. To-day Thackeray, however gentlemanly, would not be ashamed to acknowledge being or knowing a leader-writer, but on the other hand he would sneer (as a fashionable thing to do) at the Press as an institution. Thirty years ago the actual Thackerayan view prevailed on both points, if a little weakened. There was still almost a sacredness attaching to serious print. Men were so anxious to respect the Press that they frowned on any tendencies to levity which might occasionally be found. A journal purporting to give news and views had gravity forced upon it. It is true that a great deal of licence was

allowed to the comic and periodical Press, which was, on the whole, much less decorous than that of to-day. These publications, indeed, seemed to be tolerated rather on the old respectable principle that, since there must be wickedness, it is well to give it a definite outlet, so as to avoid the evils of general contamination. These papers were, so to speak, the journalistic *filles de joie* who, by the sacrifice of their own reputation, safeguarded the vestal innocence of the responsible sheets. In their pages the reader could, if his tastes lay that way, find all the spice, suggestiveness, and scandalous piquancy he wanted. In the great dailies all was propriety and dullness. They were the work of the shorthand reporter and the leader-writer. Home news meant Parliament, public meetings, and police court "intelligence." Foreign news meant (to quote Mr. Balfour) the "dull and doubtful details of the European diary daily transmitted by 'our special correspondent.'" Leaders, broadly speaking, meant comment on the speeches and the despatches.

The old journalism had a great tradition behind it. It was never, indeed, quite what its eulogists would have us believe. There never was a time when the feet of advertisers were not beautiful upon its staircases. There never was a time when the proprietor thought of his paper purely as a public institution. Indeed, the fact was rather that the proprietor was so much of a tradesman that he restricted himself to the commercial side of his venture. There were exceptions, of course, like some of the Walter family, who took a very living interest in policy. But as a rule the great newspaper plutocrat had little social ambition, and less interest in home or foreign politics. Such a man knew that he was a Conservative and a Churchman, or that he was a Liberal and a Nonconformist, or that he was a Secularist and a Radical, or that he was a "kind of a

plaid." But he did not greatly trouble about specific things political: he left that to his editor. He "set" a general policy, and then looked round for someone to carry it out: the someone soon showed whether he was going to be a success or a failure. If he were a failure, the proprietor had the misery of another trial; if he were a success, another name was added to the list of "great editors." The proprietor occasionally asked him to dinner, much as Mr. Bungay asked his contributors to "cut mutton" with him; but for months together the editor dictated policy without a hint from above.

A man thus working for a mere salary—and that not exactly a princely one, for Mr. Mudford's five thousand a year on *The Standard* was almost the plum of the profession—might, one would think, get into all sorts of bad courses in thus working practically without supervision. He might well become a drunkard, or a lazybones, or a venal scoundrel. In fact, every editor was a model of probity, and almost all the editors showed great energy and ability. Commonly they developed a most romantic loyalty to their papers and proprietors, and generally ended by dying of sheer exhaustion in their service. But this was not the Victorian editor's only loyalty. Even more striking was his sense of what was due to the public. He felt in his very marrow the obligation to serve the public to the best of his ability, both as regarded information and counsel. If he thought the mass of the public was right from his political standpoint, then it must be kept intelligently right; if it was wrong, then it must be argued out of its error. But he held it as a cardinal principle that the public must not be merely bamboozled, still less misled by sheer lies, and knowingly he never published false or distorted information. His comments might be partial, but his news was honest. Such an editor never boasted himself as a person of special integrity;

on the contrary he generally spoke in private with extreme cynicism, and was as far removed from priggishness as a man could well be. Yet few bishops, priests, or deacons held so firmly to professional duties and decencies.

It was part of the character of these men to be anonymous. Inside their offices they were autocrats ; outside they were less than nobodies ; they did not properly exist at all. Delane, ubiquitous and social-minded, was the exception. The rule was rather represented by Mudford of *The Standard*, who would see nobody at his office, and, when a Cabinet Minister once pursued him to his private house, called to his servant from the dining-room, " Tell Lord —— I am not at home." Mudford's offices in Shoe Lane were fitted up with all sorts of secret passages to enable him to enter or leave without notice, and though, by a perfect intelligence service, he knew everything that was going on, he was himself as invisible as the Mikado of old. Next to the editors, the chief personages of the " great dailies " were the leader-writers. They were often socially better known as individuals than the editor. But it was considered bad form to be aware of their professional pursuits, and nobody was supposed to notice if at a certain hour a particular man, known to write for the Press, disappeared like the ghost of Hamlet's father when the cock crew. The old leader-writer generally belonged to the class of man who, with a little more ambition and some money or great family connection, would have gone into politics. He had usually done well at his university. He knew a good many people of the " right " sort. He belonged to a good club when it was something to belong to almost any club. He was paid well. He was, on the whole, very lightly worked, and his duties were no less pleasant than easy. Small wonder, therefore, that newspapers had a large field of selection, and that leader-writers grew

grey in the service of particular papers. Almost the only survival of this interesting class now active in the Press is Sir Sidney Low, the author of *The Governance of England* and a number of other valuable works. The technique of daily writing probably never reached a higher perfection than with him ; he had a most uncanny power of producing, as fast as his pencil (for he eschewed the pen, fountain or otherwise) could travel over paper, an article strong in common sense, coherent in argument, abounding in incidental felicities of quotation and illustration, and delightful in its easy freedom and picturesqueness.

A rather heavier weight was the late Mr. S. H. Jeyes, who was for long associated with Sir Sidney Low on *The Standard*. Jeyes was happy in being exactly suited temperamentally to his medium. I could never think of Sir Sidney Low as a true Conservative ; but the other was as good a specimen of the natural Tory as ever existed. His was not the Toryism of mental inertia, still less of stupidity, for he had a brain of the very first quality, and in spite of a tendency to indolence got through an enormous deal of work ; but both his temper and his philosophy of life were wholly Conservative, and the Gladstonian Liberal, I fancy, aroused in him an almost physical repulsion. Like Carlyle, he was much more tolerant of the Mountain than of the Gironde, and a real Bolshevist would probably have affected him less unfavourably than a constitutional Socialist of the type whom the Bolshevist swallowed. He commanded a style of massive strength, and had a curiously impressive way of smashing some small antagonist in a line, much as one might settle the hash of an annoying insect, and then passing on in careless unconcern to a more important person or matter. Perhaps the mordancy of his style was increased by his studies of Juvenal, of whose satires he has left an extremely lively translation ; he loved the Latin

idiom, which he could use with almost as much freedom as English, and his own manner savoured of classic severity and compression. He lived just long enough to see the beginning of the end of *The Standard*, to which his best years had been devoted.

A feature of the old daily papers was a " light " leader on a literary or general subject ; here the hand of the political leader-writer was seldom used, though Sir Sidney Low, whose range was extraordinarily wide, has done some very charming things in this genre. A famous contributor of *The Standard* was Alfred Austin, whom many thought better in his workaday prose than in his occasional verse. Austin seldom stirred from his place near Ashford, in Kent, and was perhaps the only leader-writer whose contributions were habitually transmitted by wire. Another charming writer of these fancy leaders was Andrew Lang. Mr. Hutchinson has dealt with him in a charming sketch in his *Portraits of the Eighties*, but Lang's hand was still discoverable by the discerning in the *Daily News* of the earlier Nineties.

Such in the main was the " great daily " : an affair of a " great editor," talented leader-writers, and a few highly-paid correspondents in certain big capitals. The rest of the staff were nobodies, inferior in education, in social standing, and in professional status ; and there was a sort of Chinese wall, moral and sometimes even physical, between them and the aristocrats. This rigidity was unfavourable to progress, and it so happened that about the beginning of the Nineties the supply of really " great editors " fell short. Mr. Buckle, of *The Times*, might, indeed, be accounted such, but he had special difficulties in his way—perhaps the chief of them was the great blow of the Pigott forgeries—and among the controllers of the other " great dailies " (except the *Daily Telegraph*, which has always been peculiar in having a most active and vigilant proprietorial element) there

was none of quite the same calibre as the Mudfords and the Delanes. There was thus a deadness about the Press which positively invited the invasion of a robust competitor.

The first who made a burst into that silent sea was Mr. T. P. O'Connor with *The Star* ; Mr. W. T. Stead's experiments with the *Pall Mall Gazette* were not of long duration, and the enterprise of *The Echo,* one of the earliest pioneers of popular journalism, was not specially distinctive. *The Star* may be taken as typical of the newer journalistic school of the early Nineties. In those days it was a strange blend of seriousness and flippancy. To the rather stodgy decorum of the old-established papers it opposed a curiously insincere rowdyism. I say " insincere," but perhaps the better adjective would be " forced." *The Star* was really not at all vulgar. On its literary side it stood for the very opposite of vulgarity ; the true vulgarity was on the side of the staid and respectable critics. And in politics it was mainly for all that was honest and of good report ; one might smile at the enthusiasms of a purely Cockney print for " Home to the village and back to the land," but one could not accuse it of an unworthy or trivial outlook. But it tried with extraordinary strenuousness to give the impression of vulgarity. In dealing with the gravest matters it affected a riot of titular fantasy tending to scandalise the steady-going. On the whole, it clung to the narrow range of subjects affected by the older papers, but it dished up the meetings and despatches piping hot and with a *sauce piquante* of " bright " headline. The news of the " Wife Murder at Stepney " might be substantially the same as in the ordinary paper, but *The Star* sought to induce cheerfulness by heading the paragraph " Bullets for Mother." A criminal who cut his throat while trying to escape from the police was described as " A Scarlet Runner." But this jocularity was often too abstruse to be really

popular. *The Star* was staffed chiefly by clever and rebellious young men, most of whom have since done well for themselves and perhaps for others, and they were incorrigible in inferring, not only much mental alertness in their readers, but a considerable acquaintance with the dead languages and the French and English classics. Thus, if there happened to be a strike of bakers settled by compromise, the glad news was pretty sure to be announced under the headline "*Dough ut des*," which might have delighted a frivolous man of education, but could hardly have failed to leave the ordinary proletarian (supposed to be the main support of the paper) in a state of angry mystification. Suppose, also, that some gorgeous Maharajah happened to come over to one of the recurrent royal pageants, dropping diamonds wherever he went—"Lo! The Rich Indian," the predestined headline, might tickle an idle man who remembered the original quotation and recalled the rest of the couplet. But to the brewer's drayman it would seem a mere gratuitous silliness. It was this disastrous cleverness, perhaps more than anything else, which prevented the ultimate victory resting with the newer journalism, and left the way open to the newest school.

The newer journalism, however, set many of the fashions that still prevail to-day. It broke up the old anonymity of the Press. Few people would have been able at that time to say who edited *The Times*, *The Standard*, or *The Morning Post*, who wrote those charming things on golf and Shakespeare and the musical glasses, or who was responsible for exalting "The Bells" or decrying "Ghosts." But everybody knew that Mr. T. P. O'Connor started *The Star*, that Mr. Bernard Shaw "did" the music for it, that Mr. A. B. Walkley "did" the drama, and that Mr. Ernest Parke, after a very short time, inherited Mr. O'Connor's mantle. The name of Mr. Parke at once

suggests what was perhaps the feature which most strongly differentiated the journalism of the early Nineties, new or old, from that which was seen clearly to be most successful at the end of the decade. I mean its unashamed preaching, its conviction that it had a mission, and its content to risk being a bore if only the mission could succeed. Ernest Parke was—I speak of him in the past tense, though he happily remains in the present, because, while he is still hale and vigorous, his massive and once golden head is no longer a common object of the Fleet Street landscape—a journalist of a type now hardly existent. To begin with, he was an extraordinary judge of ability of any kind, and managed to surround himself, at singularly low cost for the most part to his principals, with young men who have since either earned distinction in letters or have gone to form the *cadres* of all the chief newspaper staffs of London. In the second place he contrived to maintain all the realities of the sternest discipline with all the forms of anarchy. The shyest new arrival soon fell into the habit of calling him by his surname, and making jokes (not excluding practical jokes) at his expense. Yet the terror of being found out by him in any slackness or stupidity lay on the oldest inhabitant as much as on the rawest recruit. He contrived to give the journalistic calling all the zest of a joke with all the earnestness of a religious vocation. His interests were singularly wide. Himself very far removed from the scholarly, he had the keenest appreciation of all the newest things in literature and the arts, and there was no better rough judge of good, sound writing. On the other hand, he had the capacity of feeling deeply on all sorts of odd things to which the bookish man is commonly indifferent. He could work himself up—or perhaps he did not need working up—into a state of frenzy over the " guzzling " and junketing propensities of various public or semi-public bodies

in the City of London. He waged deadly war against all ill-treatment of animals. A workhouse " scandal " would move him to extraordinary indignation. A police court sentence which appealed to him as unjust or cruel would rouse all the generous Quixote as well as all the original savage in him. But he did not, by any means, think parochially—or perhaps it would be more accurate to say that, if he thought parochially, he made the whole world his parish. Something happening in Russia would excite him no less, in given circumstances, than something happening in Mile End. He kept his eye as vigilantly on the iniquity of the Turk as on the shiftiness of a minor Minister or the advertisements of a bucket-shop fraud. The memory of his long duel with the Rockefellers over " low-flash oil " still lingers with the older inhabitants of Fleet Street. I happened to be out of England for some years while this crusade was proceeding. My last uncloudy impression of the Old Country was a placard at Southampton with some such words as " Nearing Victory over Low-Flash," and my first clear impression on my return was another placard at Tilbury (a rather depressed-looking and washed-out placard) bearing the legend " Another Low-Flash Horror—How long, Oh Lord, how long ? " —or words to that effect.

A vague and even rather bewildered kindness of heart, a noble indignation against any sort of oppression, corruption, or insolence, a general sympathy with the under-dog anywhere and everywhere—these Ernest Parke had in common with a number of men who, lacking the essential sanity which was at the bottom of his very English temperament, drifted into mere faddism, humanitarian eccentricity, and anti-nationalism : the sort of men who, to quote Mr. Chesterton, would first ask us to eat nothing but vegetables, then tell us that it was wicked to consume even grass, and finally ask, in a flush of noble senti-

ment, " Why should salt suffer ? " But Mr. Parke may well serve as the representative of a whole class of editors, flourishing in the Nineties, who were not afraid to be bores, and (by some miracle) succeeded in escaping the usual fate of the bore. In ordinary life the man who insists on expounding his view of a certain set of questions is shunned like the plague : business interest, blood relationship, deep-seated esteem suffice not to win him toleration. A boring newspaper is easier to avoid than a boring individual ; the remedy is simply not to buy it. The only conclusion, therefore, is either that the public of that day enjoyed " damned iteration," or that the " damned iteration " was done with great art. The contrast between the preaching journalism of the Nineties and the preaching journalism of to-day cannot be better exemplified than by the history of two agitations. In the Nineties there was an agitation against the Turk. The British public was called on to express its feeling concerning a great massacre of Armenians. It was invited to condemn " the dripping sword of Abdul the Damned." Now the Armenians, though an ill-used, were a very far-away people ; not one out of a thousand Englishmen had ever seen an Armenian, or even framed any clear picture of the nature or geographical disposition of an Armenian. Yet, after some weeks of newspaper agitation, the whole country was ringing with indignation against the Sultan, and Lord Rosebery's retirement was hastened by the incompatibility between his views on these massacres and those of the great majority of the Liberal Party.

Contrast this agitation with that concerning recent Irish administration. Ireland lies a few hours from England, and vast numbers of Englishmen have friends among the Irish. The Irish question is not a remote affair of foreign politics, but is most intimately connected with all our great interests, as well

as all our party feuds and intrigues. Whatever be the exact truth about the situation, it is certain that the state of Ireland has long been worse than it has ever been within living memory, and it is equally certain that for a hundred years no such allegations have been made against a British Government in regard to Ireland as the allegations that are made to-day. But the newspapers which have the clearest political interest in agitation do not agitate. Apparently they are not without the wish to agitate, for they occasionally publish strongly-worded articles. What they have lost is less the spirit than the knack of agitation. That knack consists in merciless and unremitting repetition, in what the ordinary man calls "rubbing it in." The facts have to be made clear, not once or twice, but seventy times seven. The public has to be given no chance of forgetting and no excuse for misunderstanding. The paper that would succeed in agitation must, in short, be prepared to make itself a very serious bore. It must be prepared to lose something in order to gain something. It must be ready to sacrifice any reputation it may have with office boys and millinery hands, who are not and cannot be made interested in politics. It must even reconcile itself to the loss of a nice balance of headlines on its main news page. Now the modern editor is far too much of an artist to make these sacrifices. He is prepared to give Ireland some sort of show if Ireland happens to be much in the picture. But even then the eternal test match and the never-remitting golf championship cannot be banished to the sporting page, and prominence simply must be found for the pathetic little story about the "Thousand Million Dollar Baby," while the demands of local interest compel due attention to "Spooks in a Norfolk Rectory," and "Cat at an Eastbourne Whist Drive." So Ireland's tale of woe flows through the paper like an Australian river. It is easily

traceable to the extent of a column ; with some little difficulty one finds an inch and a half of it under " Rembrandt for Ninepence " two columns away ; the mystery thickens when, referred to " continuation on page seven," one finds nothing there but a company meeting and " Are we Immodest ? " (continued from page eight) ; but finally the residue of the Irish revelations is, by a lucky chance, run to ground on the City page between " Butter Quiet " and " Copper Uneasy." This is what happens when Ireland is uppermost. At other times just nothing happens. When Ireland does not deserve an important headline Ireland does not get one, and the perfunctory paragraph is relegated to some back page, where a provincial tennis match crowds it out.

Now the editor of the Nineties had none of this excessive respect for the momentary and this strange disregard for continuity. Nor was he in the smallest degree concerned about the symmetry of his news page. His main idea was to make an impression, and an impression he certainly made. The truth is that he felt himself less an artist in newspaper technique than a prophet ; often a Nonconformist by extraction, sometimes a secularist of that Victorian type which was really more religious than the orthodox, he was consumed with the idea that it was his business to put the world right, and if he thought the world could be put a little more right by letting an article run to five good columns, he could not bring himself to hack it into two poor columns. He would rather leave out something about a dog swallowing a will.

Curiously enough, the only newspapers which have not lost the knack of propaganda are those which, in their origin, represented the revulsion against propagandist journalism, and set out to supply simply " what the public wants." What I have called the newest journalism of the Nineties (that is, the most

solidly established journalism of to-day) has none of the moral fervour of the Parkes and Steads. But it understands as well as they did the importance of "rubbing it in"; and modern history might well have run a far different course had such mastery of method been associated with a more stable political philosophy.

This newest journalism is the child of two men—Alfred, Viscount Northcliffe, and Mr. Kennedy Jones, M.P. The soul of it belongs to the one, the body of it was moulded by the other. There were immediate imitators, careful but uninspired, like Sir Arthur Pearson, and in the long run all sorts of old papers abjectly copied the methods which had brought them discomfiture. Other magnates, endowed with more character, adopted the spirit while imparting to their productions a rather more masculine note. But on the whole the great revolution in the Press since the Nineties took its form from the personality of these two men. The journalism represented by *The Star* was half a joke and half a crusade, with a commercial side to it. It was meant to pay, and no doubt did pay up to a point; but its main motive was hardly a purely commercial motive. The newest journalism, on the other hand, was frankly businesslike: it set out to industrialise Bohemia, and succeeded. It was as businesslike as a tea-shop: indeed, its progress was very like that of the great tea-shop concerns. The tea-shops started with the lightest of refreshments; the newest journalism started with the lightest of reading. The tea-shop concerns went on extending and experimentalising until they embraced every branch of the trade; they bought up old concerns and started new ones; but to every acquisition and departure they imparted something of their own original character. It was the same with the newest journalism. Starting on crackers and sherbert, it worked its way to fifteen-course dinners and vintage

wines. But it has retained throughout a certain singularity; and that singularity is the complete standardisation of things of the spirit. The newer journalism carelessly made a joke, sniggered over it, and then forgot all about it. The very new journalism, on the contrary, treated a joke as a very serious thing, in which it was right—a joke is a very serious thing. It decided against certain classes of jokes. There must not be jokes about Nonconformists: many advertising agents are Nonconformists. There must not be jokes about Jews: many Jews are wealthy and prone to advertising; was not the first advertisement on record that of a Frankfort Jew? Jokes against "aliens" are, of course, permissible. On the whole, there must not be jokes about the Church of England, though that is a less serious matter. There must not be "unpleasant" jokes; otherwise the babies' foods and the condensed milks will not come into the advertising columns. Finally, by a process of exhaustion, the right kinds of jokes are reached, and by due experiment (prize competitions and the like) conducted with all the seriousness of a Home Office analysis, it is found which particular kind of joke brings the greatest happiness to the greatest number. This discovery made, the joke is made the subject of mass production, and vast stocks are poured out until the bookstall agents recommend a change. It is much the same with news; the experts can tell within five hundred the circulation effect of an ordinary murder, a "mystery," a "poison mystery," a "poison mystery" with a "money motive," a "poison mystery" with a "love motive," a divorce case with two eminent co-respondents and no particular point, and a divorce case with one quite undistinguished co-respondent and a strong "heart interest." The business mind only begins to haver when it reaches the rarefied atmosphere of high politics. It inclines to the view that, war apart,

foreign news is only useful to give a certain distinction to a paper, but that home politics may occasionally furnish the raw material for a really effective "stunt."

The victory of the newest journalism over the old and the rather new is only part of the general victory of standardisation and mass production over the older and more individual enterprise. Everybody knows all about what it has given the public—how it has placed every village much on a news equality with the great towns, how it has given vastly increased and diversified news services, how it has spread the habit of reading (if not of thinking) over great classes which never glanced at a book or a newspaper. It is not my business to discuss all this, which belongs to the new century. More to the present purpose is to indicate what it has destroyed, but what was still living and vigorous in the Nineties.

In the first place, it has destroyed that singular thing called editorial responsibility, to which I alluded above. In the second, it has given the newspaper the flickering unsteadiness of a cinema film, instead of the fixity appropriate to the printed page ; the paper amuses and interests more, but instructs and leads far less. In the third, it has undoubtedly debased the taste for really good and especially for really thoughtful writing. But, above all, it has tended to render obsolete the prophet in print, the man who feels a vocation to right wrongs, to preach crusades, or to insist, in season and out, on the importance of principle. Such men are now scarcely found in modern daily journalism, and if they were never so numerous they would find difficulty in getting a hearing. They linger, with increasing difficulty, on the weekly papers ; they seem doomed to eventual extinction ; but when they go the world will be the poorer for their loss. In the Nineties a notable specimen of this kind of man, notable but perhaps scarcely brilliant, was Sir Thomas Wemyss Reid, the

first conductor of *The Speaker*, which attempted to be to Gladstonian Liberalism what *The Spectator* was to Unionism. His warm friend, Lord Rosebery, has paid him as noble a tribute as journalist ever earned from man of affairs. "His ideal of friendship," says Lord Rosebery, "was singularly lofty and generous. He was the devoted and chivalrous champion of those he loved; he took up their cause as his own, and much more than his own; he was the friend of their friends, and the enemy of their enemies. No man ever set a higher value on this high connection, which, after all, whether brought about by kinship, or sympathy, or association, or gratitude, or stress, is, under Heaven, the sweetest solace of our poor humanity; and so it coloured and guided the life of Wemyss Reid. His chief works were all monuments to that faith; it inspired him in tasks which he knew would be irksome, and which could scarcely be successful, or which at least could ill satisfy his own standard. This is a severe test for a man of letters, but he met it without fail." It was perhaps this sympathy, as well as his discrimination, which enabled Reid to gather round him so brilliant a group of contributors; among them were Mr. John (now Lord) Morley, Mr. J. A. Spender (the present editor of the *Westminster Gazette*), Mr. Herbert Paul, Mr. James (now Lord) Bryce, Sir Alfred Lyall, Mr. Augustine Birrell, Mr. Frederic Harrison, Mr. James Payn, Mr. Henry James, Mr. (now Sir) J. M. Barrie, and Mr. A. B. Walkley.

Wemyss Reid detested above all things what was then called the new but what I have called the newer journalism; he would have hated still more the newest journalism; and he gave John Morley advice (which was at the time rather resented) to keep strict control over the activities of W. T. Stead. He did not believe in government by newspaper, and Stead's essay in connection with the

mission of General Gordon more than ever convinced him that the proper function of the Press was rather to check Ministers than to dictate their policy. His *Speaker* was ultimately not a success, and if he is noted here it is chiefly because the journalistic ideas for which he stood, as well as his politics, are still represented by one of the most brilliant of his younger colleagues, Mr. J. A. Spender, who now directs the *Westminster Gazette*, and there exemplifies his old chief's horror of sensationalism and love of balance.

CHAPTER XXIX

SOME ACTORS

THEATRICALLY the Nineties were less interesting than the preceding decade. The Eighties saw the great glories both of the Savoy and the Lyceum; they might be likened to a glorious May and a blazing June; the Nineties were rather a tired late summer fading into an inglorious autumn. There was little new, and the old was not quite at its best.

Perhaps it was the discovery by a large class of a new pleasure that chiefly contributed to make the theatre of thirty and forty years ago an institution only second in interest to politics. The theatre-going habit has now become general; the theatre itself tends to be a specialist interest—like sport. Certain classes of young people have their pet pieces and actors, and perhaps lavish on them just as much worship as their grandfathers and grandmothers did on Irving and Ellen Terry, on Grossmith and Jessie Bond, on Hare, and Wyndham, and Toole. But no actor or actress commands the same general adoration that was rendered to the great stage people of the golden age when the cinema and the standardised music-hall were still unborn. The most splendid first night is only an item in the morning's news. In the old days it competed seriously with a despatch from the Front or the speech of a Prime Minister. I can well remember the appearance of the daily papers on the morrow of a new Gilbert and Sullivan opera. The sketch of the plot and extracts from the libretto occupied perhaps three columns; another couple of columns were devoted to the score; perhaps another

one and a half to the dresses and the " brilliant house." It is true that we have no Gilbert and Sullivan to-day. But if both were with us in the happiest inspiration of their whole collaboration it is inconceivable that they should occupy such a space in the public eye. The viands of the Eighties and Nineties may be equalled again ; after all, with the solitary exception of light opera, they were not specially wonderful. It is the appetite that we seek in vain. The English people were then, theatrically speaking, children, and had the zest of the child. They have since grown up, and, while leaning more on stronger drink, find the tipple less exhilarating.

How much of the earlier glories of the Lyceum were due to the fascination exerted by Miss Ellen Terry, and how much to the genius of Henry Irving, must always remain a matter of opinion. But concerning Irving's greatness there can be only one view. There were all sorts of things he was not. He was not a good judge of a play ; whenever he forsook the straight path of Shakespeare he tended woefully to the pretentious or the trivial. He was in some ways not even a good actor ; his mannerisms were often unpleasing, and his declamation was sometimes absurd. He was not, probably, a man of very high general intellect. But one thing Irving undoubtedly was : he was great—as great in his own line as Gladstone in Gladstone's. He dominated the stage as no other man did in his time, or has done since, and he raised the whole public conception of the profession to a level before undreamed of. The diaries of Macready are full of lamentations concerning the hard fate which condemned an authentic public school boy to a degrading servitude. When Irving sent his own boys to Marlborough the arrangement seemed perfectly natural, and when they left nobody was astonished that they should follow their

father's instead of the more "reputable" careers which Macready eyed with envy.

This elevation of the stage was very largely Irving's personal work, and it was a work which no common man could have achieved. Irving was a most uncommon man. Though natural and unaffected in private, he impressed everybody with whom he came in contact, and was almost more eloquent in his silences than in his speech, excellent as that was. He was a quite incomparable host, and no man ever received so various a society: nearly everybody who was anybody knew Irving. The Emperor Frederick and Mr. Gladstone were among the many distinguished people who at one time or another "went behind" at the Lyceum, and the list of those who partook of Irving's "chicken and champagne"—to quote a long-lived remark of a rather ill-natured critic—would swell to the limits of a select "Who was Who." For instance, at the Diamond Jubilee in 1897 he entertained all the Colonial Premiers, Indian Princes, and visitors from overseas who had been mentioned in the official lists!

All this lavish hospitality meant the spending of money, and money could only come by labour. As he went on, Irving put a greater and greater strain on his nervous system, and, made of steel as he seemed in his prime, he suffered heavily in later years for his prodigal expenditure of energy. His luck turned about the middle of the Nineties; a seemingly slight accident cast him aside for best part of three months, involving a heavy loss; a year later he suffered heavily by the burning of his stage properties; still another year, and he was stricken with an illness which left a permanent mark on his physique and his spirit. For some years an overpowering depression rested on him, a sense of tragic disappointment, and it was only when he had reached the confines of old age that his old serenity returned. But even in the heyday of his success he never showed more

essential gallantry than in the last fight against embarrassment, infirmity, and (in a sense) solitude. He had not been spoiled by his successes, and he remained above his reverses. He should have died, considering the vast sums he received, a rich man—his last tour in America yielded him, for example, a net profit of over £32,000—but, if he was " unsatisfied in getting," he was too princely in bestowing to save money. Himself temperate, sparing in diet, satisfied with moderate lodgment, without vices or personal extravagances, and no gambler, he literally showered money on all pursuits and projects tending to increase the finish of his own productions or to improve the standing of the stage in the eyes of the world. He was the first to translate into terms of gorgeous expense Mr. Crummles's faith in " real water—splendid tubs." In his plays no detail was omitted. For *Becket* he obtained the services of a high Roman Catholic dignitary to secure that the cathedral scenes, while impressively realistic to the general, should not offend the religious susceptibilities of the understanding. This devotion to stage upholstery set a vicious fashion of subordinating the picture to the frame, the actor to the scenery, and in the end it nearly ruined Irving. But it had its due effect in raising the stage in public estimation ; clearly anything which wanted so much capital could not be quite disreputable.

Irving was survived nearly a year by his old friend Toole. Like Irving, Toole started as a London clerk, but, while Irving to the last retained some small trace of his native province, Somersetshire, Toole was wholly Cockney. The pair met at Edinburgh in 1857, and the friendship then formed lasted undiminished till Irving's death. When Toole was told the news he said quietly, " Then let me die too." Toole's chief triumphs came before the Nineties, and the young people who saw him for the few years

before his retirement could hardly comprehend the legend that had gathered round his name. Still less could they appreciate the stories of his rather naïve fooling in private. But then, all humour is a mystery, and people who " sneer when you inform them that a door may be a jar " will roar their sides out at something no more complex, but more modish.

Irving, much as he had to do with the making of the modern stage, smacked a good deal of the floridity of an earlier period. Sir John Hare was more typical of modern finish ; his acting in *A Pair of Spectacles* set a standard that may often have been equalled by the polished comic actors of to-day, but has hardly been excelled. Hare got so much in the habit of playing old gentlemen's parts that he had the credit of being much more advanced in years than he really was. He was once at dinner where Mr. Gladstone was also a guest. " Who is that ? " whispered Gladstone to his hostess. " Hare ? Oh, yes, yes, yes. I once met his father, the manager of the Garrick."

Hare belonged to a distinctly higher social class than either Irving or Toole. So also did Sir Charles Wyndham. The son of a London doctor, he had received a first-rate education, and practised for some time as a doctor before going on the stage. A handsome person, great vivacity, and a well-bred lightness of touch made him a king of comedy, and his tradition is still one of the strongest inspirations in the modern theatre.

No account of the entertainers of the Nineties would be complete without reference to a form of amusement which, though it still exists in a small way, was in its biggest way thirty years ago. Its chief exponents were Corney Grain and George Grossmith. The German Reed entertainments have now a very far-away sound ; the sight of the name

gives the same sort of feeling as the sign over some old-fashioned confectioners', "Routs Catered For." Yet German Reed was very much alive in its time. It could not be otherwise with the aid of so very vital a person as the gigantic Corney Grain. Grain, who was intended for the Bar, reached the stage by easy stages of amateurism and semi-professionalism, and his career was complicated by a difficulty of classification. At first the Press would barely notice him, because the musical critics said he was not Music, and the dramatic critics said he was not Drama, and everybody agreed that he was not Art. The German Reed entertainment, however, at last found its public —a very peculiar one, very proper, very middle-class, and very much intrigued with what were supposed to be the ways and humours of a superior order of society. It is a public now very largely extinct; people want either stronger or more delicate meat. But those days were different. They were the days when nigger minstrels were a considerable "financial proposition." I remember well the Press agent of one famous troop complaining to a Brighton newspaper that they had received scant notice during the visit of Sarah Bernhardt. "If it were a circus I could understand, but fancy playing second fiddle to that Frenchwoman!" he remarked in high dungeon. Both with the minstrels and with German Reed people could be sure of a due censorship of jokes and songs; they could enjoy all the luxury of wickedness without wickedness itself. "Thank you, Mr. Grain," said a bishop once at the end of a performance, "I have been not only amused, but—edified."

George Grossmith also tended to edification. In physique he was the exact opposite of Corney Grain, wizen and undersized, and once when they appeared together—the rivals were very excellent friends—Grain ended a scene by picking up Grossmith and carrying him off the stage like a baby. George

Grossmith was the son of one of those curious men who supply the newspapers with police court reports ; the business is largely hereditary, and in this case the son began life as assistant to his father. Police courts, however, rarely sit late, and the " liners " have considerable leisure to follow any other occupation. Grossmith *père* was already established as a lecturer and entertainer, and it was quite natural that the two sons—George and Weedon—should follow in his footsteps. In the late Seventies George attracted the notice of Sir Arthur Sullivan, and as a result had a run of twelve years in Savoy Opera. Gilbert was at first violently opposed to the introduction, but had to acknowledge that it was a great success, though he could never refrain from an occasional tilt at what he considered the vulgarities of Grossmith's style. In a certain part Grossmith received a box on the ear from one of the female characters, and used to fall head over heels on the stage. " I should be very much obliged if you would omit that piece of business, Mr. Grossmith," suggested Gilbert. " Why ? I get a tremendous laugh with it," pleaded the actor. " So you would if you sat down on a pork pie," retorted Gilbert, who could never bear that applause should be diverted from his " book " by mere " gag."

It was just at the end of the Eighties that Grossmith left the Savoy for the business of " society entertainer " on the Corney Grain plan. He made an immediate success, the best tribute to which may be quoted ; it was that of a girl at a Yorkshire seaside place : " Oh, how we did laugh ! It was laugh, laugh, laugh ! All the people kept laughing, and then we laughed. Then the people laughed again, and so did we, and when we got home we laughed more than ever, for none of us knew what we had been laughing at." But for that happy weakness of human nature, fewer professional funny men would pay super-tax.

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